RESTORATIVE JUSTICE IN SCHOOLS: REVIEWING BEST PRACTICES AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

by

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Abstract

In recent years, school districts have taken an interest in restorative justice as they consider alternative ways of securing school safety. This has become a priority for schools, communities, and governments in light of several incidents of extreme violence in Canada and the United States. These incidents have received a lot of attention and forced schools to examine alternative ways of preventing and responding to bullying, violence, and disruptive behaviour (Morrison, 2007).

This paper is a review of the related literature regarding restorative justice and its implementation in schools. There is little available research in this area from a number of countries including Canada. There is a trend to move toward restorative justice in the school system and conducting this review will be an asset to schools considering change as well as stakeholders in order to have the opportunity to review what has worked or not in other school districts so they can make informed decisions. The importance of having the school board, administrators, and principals support to lead the change along with the development of a whole school approach to solving problems has been echoed throughout the literature. Implementing restorative justice in schools can be challenging as it requires the whole school to shift their thinking toward the development of a community and changing the culture within the school. To be most effective, restorative justice practices should be implemented in elementary schools so that restorative values and practices can be taught to younger children. There must be some process implemented to assist school staff to be directly involved in restorative practices while still fulfilling their primary responsibilities, the education and training of all school staff in restorative practices must be focused and continual, and funding and other resource

support for the process, for a follow-up period, and for empirically-based evaluations must be secured prior to implementing restorative practices in schools. Related to this, and critically, the objectives and measures used to identify success and failure must be clearly established in ways that both achieve the specific needs of the school community, but also serve to allow the school to be evaluated and compared to other schools that have and have not employed restorative practices.

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Introduction

The term restorative justice has been around since the 1970s (Barnett, 1977). The roots of restorative justice can be found in the field of criminal justice. The goal of restorative justice is to bring together all parties affected by a criminal incident for the purpose of allowing all sides to fully understand the context and effect of the incident and to create a resolution that will address and repair the harm caused to people and relationships. Restorative justice promotes accountability, healing, reconciliation, reintegration, forgiveness, and closure. One of the critical ways that restorative justice differs from current, formal criminal justice practices in Canada is that the affected parties are provided with the opportunity to create a resolution that will help repair the harm caused to them by the incident. Johnstone and Van Ness (2006) claimed that restorative justice controls and responds to crime more effectively, but it can also accomplish other desirable goals, such as a creating a meaningful experience of justice, healing for victims and offenders, accountability for offenders, reintegration of offenders into law-abiding society, recovery of social capital, and fiscal savings.

Principles of restorative justice are compatible with recent government reform efforts encouraging community involvement, personal responsibility, partnerships, and collaboration among service providers (O'Brien and Bazemore, 2004). Restorative justice programs utilize volunteers and other grass roots programs to increase the community's capacity for social control through conflict resolution, education, collaborative problem solving, and offender reform. By involving the community directly and being proactive, the restorative justice process can serve to strengthen the community and increase public confidence in the justice system (O'Brien and Bazemore, 2004).

Given the potential of restorative justice programs, a number of school districts have started using restorative practices to create a stronger sense of community within the school and as a way to prevent and respond to a number of school-based problems, such as bullying and violence. Growing dissatisfaction with current disciplinary action has prompted educators to explore other avenues to create safe, supportive learning environments (Porter, 2007). As an increasing number of schools worldwide are implementing restorative practices, it becomes critical to evaluate restorative justice's effectiveness as a disciplinary and rehabilitative technique.

In order to provide an analysis of restorative justice programs in schools, this major paper will be divided into three chapters. Chapter One provides a brief history of restorative justice, its fundamental principles, and the various processes and models used since its inception. Moreover, this chapter will analyze Braithwaite's reintegrative shaming theory (1989) and discuss how this theoretical approach relates to restorative justice. The chapter concludes with a review of the limitations of restorative justice.

Chapter Two provides a comprehensive review of the literature on school-based restorative justice. It examines evaluations conducted until 2007 on current restorative programs and pilot projects in schools worldwide. The evaluations are examined by country and are not in chronological order. The majority of the research derives from Australia, New Zealand, Europe, and the United States. This chapter provides a summary of the findings and assesses what worked and did not work for the schools based on the outcome evaluations conducted on these programs.

Chapter Three examines the gaps, challenges, and successes of the programs reviewed in Chapter Two. This chapter will also document the importance of future

research and evaluation in this area. The chapter concludes with a ‘best practices’ model, recommendations, and implementation strategies for schools based on the current state of the research literature. The final chapter provides a general summary of this paper and looks ahead to next steps.

Chapter One: The Historical Development of Restorative Justice

What is Restorative Justice

Restorative justice promotes accountability, collaboration, inclusivity, healing, empowerment, reconciliation, reintegration, forgiveness, and closure (Barton, 2003; Pranis, 2007; Zehr, 1990). By involving all those affected, restorative justice promotes full understanding from all parties. Most commonly, it has been characterized as a process where all parties with a stake in a criminal offence voluntarily come together to collectively deal with the aftermath of an offence and its implications for the future (Marshall, 1999).

Sharpe (1998) proposed five key principles of restorative justice. First, restorative justice invites full participation and consensus. This means not only those who are directly involved in the incident, but others who feel they have been negatively affected in some way may participate in the conference. Second, restorative justice seeks to heal what has been harmed for both the victim and the offender. Third, it seeks to make the offender fully and directly accountable for their actions by having the offender take responsibility for their offending and confronting those who have suffered. Fourth, it seeks to reunite what has been divided. This goes further than a positive interaction between the offender and the victim, and includes reintegrating both into the wider community. Lastly, restorative justice seeks to strengthen the community in order to prevent further harm. While focused on a particular incident, restorative justice works towards addressing inequities within the community to make it a more just and safe society.

Restorative justice programs can take many different forms, but they are usually

operated by an independent organization working in cooperation with the criminal justice system. For example many of the initial restorative justice programs were known as victim-offender mediation programs. They brought the victim and the offender together with a trained mediator or facilitator in a neutral environment to discuss the incident. In this approach, each party is asked to tell their story, express how the incident affected them, and ask any questions they would like answered. In order to proceed, the offender must accept responsibility for the offense and the victim must agree to participate. In general terms, the mediator or facilitator helps the parties reach a satisfactory agreement on how the offender can make reparation for the offense(s) (Zehr, 1990).

During the 1990s, restorative practices broadened to include collaborative conferences or circles where the offenders' and victims' support people (families and friends) could also participate (McCold and Wachtel, 2004). Similar to the process mentioned above, in order for a conference or circle to be held, the offender had to accept responsibility for the offense and the victim(s) and offender(s) had to agree to participate. In addition to anyone who was affected by the incident, offenders and victims were encouraged to bring support people, and the investigating officer might be asked to attend. During a conference or circle, the offender, the victim, the supporters, and any other participants explained what happened, how they were affected by the offense, and what they thought should be done to repair the harm. Victims are typically asked to describe the physical, financial, and emotional consequences of the offense (Strang, 1999). After each person has had a chance to speak, the participants collaboratively develop a mutually agreed upon resolution. In Canada, New Zealand, and Australia, these types of initiatives began to be grouped and analyzed under the restorative justice

designation during the 1990s (Roche, 2006). However, conferencing programs and victim-offender reconciliation programs are currently just two of the models of restorative justice being practiced as each program slightly alters the way they operate based on the needs of their respective communities.

Restorative Justice in Practice

Restorative justice approaches have been used at various stages of the criminal justice system. There are pre-charge programs used as a diversion from the criminal justice system and post-charge programs which are alternative measures offered by Crown Counsel or the State. The Youth Criminal Justice Act (2003) legislated provisions for conferencing and the use of alternative measures. Restorative justice can be used by judges as a pre or post-sentencing tool which may include a meeting with the victim if they are in agreement. If an offender is willing to fulfill what the judge recommends, the length of a custodial disposition may be reduced. Correctional facilities can also use restorative justice as part of a prisoner's rehabilitation program. For less serious offences, restorative justice can be used as a diversion from the formal court process. With more serious offences, restorative justice can be an addition to or operate alongside a formal conviction and sentencing (Roche, 2006).

Regardless of the seriousness of the offence, or the referral source, restorative justice approaches are similar in that they involve both the victim and offender in an extended dialog about the offense and its consequences (Bright, 1997). Restorative conferencing encourages participation from all affected parties (families, community support groups, police, social workers, teachers, coaches or neighbours), in addition to

the victim and offender. However, restorative approaches are only used when the offender accepts responsibility, it is not used to determine guilt, and the offender may choose to withdraw from the process at any time. If an offender chooses to do this as part of a pre-charge program, the offender may be charged and sent to court for a traditional determination of guilt or innocence (Bright, 1997). When an offender voluntarily assumes responsibility, is willing to take part and engage in the process, and adheres to all of the agreed upon conditions, restorative justice is most effective (Sherman and Strang, 2007). Sharp (1998) argued that when offenders voluntarily accepted responsibility, they developed a more pro-social value system because they experienced more positive behavioural changes while repairing the harm they caused. This helps to appease the anger and indignation that victims and the public may feel toward them. Uncooperative offenders make it more difficult to achieve a positive result. Given this, the process cannot continue if an offender resists an intervention (Zehr, 1990).

The Conferencing Process

Restorative conferencing generally involves three phases: preparation; the conference; and post-conference monitoring (Hudson et al., 1996). During the preparation phase, a trained facilitator receives the file and meets with the participants to become acquainted, explain the process and purpose of the conference, and identify and deal with any concerns or questions they have. Once all the participants are comfortable going ahead with the conference, a date and neutral venue are selected. During the conference, the offender begins by telling his or her side of the story. This is followed by the victim telling their side. Once this stage is complete, the supporters and other participants are asked to discuss how they have been affected. All parties have a chance

to express their feelings about the events and circumstances surrounding the incident and ask questions of each other (Bright, 1997). After all the participants have had their questions answered, the circle comes up with an agreement for the offender to complete. The exact way an agreement is reached varies, but, in most cases, the group negotiates until a consensus is reached. After all the parties have agreed to a resolution, the agreement is put into writing and signed by all parties. Having complete consensus is extremely important as this provides a measure of legitimacy to the agreement as all interested parties were involved in the crafting of the document (McElrea, 1994).

After a conference, the facilitator, someone from the circle, or someone from the restorative justice organization monitors the completion of the agreement. This person is responsible for ensuring deadlines are met and assist with setting up resources for the youth or families, if needed (Bright, 1997). If the agreement cannot be successfully completed with the monitor's intervention, the file may be returned to the referring agency for further action.

Reintegrative Shaming Theory

Restorative justice lacks a unifying theoretical explanation. However, Braithwaite's reintegrative shaming theory (1989) has often been put forward as one possible explanation for the effectiveness of restorative justice practices. Braithwaite (1989) argued that tolerance of crime was dangerous for the offender in that he or she would most likely continue to commit crime without consequence. Further, he suggested disintegrative shaming (stigmatization and disrespectful out-casting) created a permanent stigma and made the effect of crime worse for those specifically involved and for society in general. Given this, Braithwaite suggested that reintegrative shaming within a

‘continuum of respect’ that did not stigmatize the offender would better prevent crime. Therefore, stigmatizing shaming does not take place as part of a restorative conference, rather, the person who caused the harm experiences shame within as a result of hearing how their actions have affected others. He noted that societies that practiced reintegrative shaming had less crime than those where shaming was disintegrative. In reintegrative shaming, it is made clear to the offender that their behaviour is not condoned, but the offender’s self-esteem and confidence are upheld through positive comments, gestures of forgiveness, and acceptance. Therefore, shaming of the behaviour or act takes place, but the individual is not stigmatized or negatively shamed (Morrison, 2007).

Reintegrative shaming happens through a restorative process and takes place when offenders experience shame for their actions through the reaction of their victims and the disapproval of their actions by those who are closest to them and whose opinions they respect. Braithwaite (2000) stated that this was a byproduct of the process and not an intentional outcome or intent to shame. The theory explained the importance of involving as many significant members of the offender’s family, friends, and supporters as possible. When people important to the offender disapprove of their behaviour, while showing signs of respect and acceptance toward the offender as a person, positive effects on the offender are maximized. Braithwaite (1989) argued that sanctions imposed by relatives, friends, or significant others had a more direct effect on the individual’s behaviour than sanctions imposed by other authorities. He believed that this was because an individual’s character in the eyes of those close to them mattered more than the opinions or actions of others.

Braithwaite (1989) stated that, in the context of restorative conferencing, the

group felt a sense of collective shame and remorse for the offense. This shared experience is a crucial turning point in the conference, a move from conflict to cooperation (McDonald and Moore, 2000). During a conference, the shame felt moves people into the collective problem-solving stage and, by working together to find ways of repairing the harm, the wrongdoer is not only included as a participant, but is recognized as having made a positive contribution. Conference participants leave the forum feeling better about each other and themselves. According to this approach, deliberate and intentional shaming, as well as humiliation, is avoided, and shame is discharged before anger and other harmful emotions arise.

Braithwaite (1989) argued that individuals who acknowledged shame and accepted personal responsibility for their actions refrained from further wrongdoing because they considered the harmful consequences of their actions and took direct steps to avoid similar behaviour in the future. Braithwaite (2000) defined this as appropriate shame acknowledgment and shame management techniques which are the processes offenders use to rationalize their wrongdoings. Individuals may manage shame more positively by accepting responsibility for their actions and making amends to those they have harmed (shame acknowledgement). Conversely, they may fail to take responsibility and blame others or deny what they have done (maladaptive shame management). However, an individual who dismisses feelings of shame through blame amplifies wrongdoing because personal action and consequences are dissociated from one another. Braithwaite (2000) defined this as shame displacement.

Scheff (1994) argued that feelings of shame and pride were central in the escalation and resolution of conflict. Pride was associated with achievement and success,

while shame was associated with failure and wrongdoing. Restorative conferencing aims to strike a balance between the two. The conference participants acknowledge the offender's feelings of shame and praise him or her for telling their story or by accepting an apology. This, in turn, produces a more positive identity for the offender.

Braithwaite's reintegrative shaming theory (1989) has been criticized as lacking an empirical base (Botchkovar and Tittle, 2006; Harris and Maruna 2006). Critics suggested that Braithwaite provided almost no analysis of what the concept of shame meant and how it worked. Several scholars have argued that the concept of shame is complex and may not be the most appropriate framework for restorative conferencing because even with the best of intentions, shaming might be interpreted by offenders as stigmatizing (Morris and Maxwell, 2001; Van Stokkom, 2002; Clairmont and Kenney, 2008). Understanding the process of shame is necessary because, according to Taylor (2002), shame is an emotion that can be harmful and may threaten an offender's sense of self-worth. If an offender feels stigmatized during a conference, there is a risk of retaliation rather than restoration.

Limitations of Restorative Justice

Those concerned with due process, principled sentencing, and crime control have criticized restorative justice. Critics have questioned how restorative justice can protect the public, protect victims, promote offender rehabilitation, and ensure the rights of the offender to a fair trial (London, 2003). Fundamentally, restorative justice is not based on punishment, which many view as a necessary component of justice (London, 2003). Corrado et al. (2003) documented that restorative justice lacked severe sanctions for the

most serious and violent offenders. Members of the community want to feel safe and, even though incarcerating offenders has not achieved this objective, it has satisfied the need for retribution. Many feel that using restorative justice for violent offenders is too lenient a process, contributes to repeat offending, and will teach offenders what they must do to avoid any 'real' punishment (Hughes and Mossman, 2001; Corrado et al., 2003).

Critics of restorative justice have also argued that this approach fails to provide adequate protection for individual rights. For example, there is a concern that victims would be too demanding or vengeful when given the opportunity to decide what the offender must do to complete the process. The restorative process is informal and usually takes place in private. It is based on the assumption that a meeting will bring out the best in a person and victims will respond with compassion and empathy. However, individuals may demonstrate highly punitive, stigmatizing, and vengeful behaviour (Criminal Justice Branch, 2007). Moreover, even when a similar offense has been committed, agreements may vary greatly depending on the attitudes of those participating in the conference. Akester (2002) determined that perpetrators of minor offences, who would previously have received a caution or conditional discharge, could end up agreeing to significant reparation agreements disproportionate to the offences committed. Participation in a restorative justice program is supposed to be voluntary; however, critics have suggested that offenders may be coerced into participating in order to avoid court proceedings (Akester, 2002).

Supporters of restorative justice argued that victims of crime benefited from meeting the offender because they learned that they were not specifically targeted, that the consequences of the offense were unintended or not fully appreciated by the offender,

and that the offence was not likely to happen again (Galaway and Hudson, 1996). However, Mika et al. (2004) contended restorative justice can re-harm a victim if an offender does not offer a genuine apology. Further, the development of an agreement may require a significant commitment of resources and the victim is likely to face additional responsibilities by participating in restorative justice compared with the outcome in an adversarial criminal justice process where victims can have no contact with their offender (Stubbs, 2004).

Similarly, confronting one's offender and their supporters during a conference may pose a physical and/or emotional risk to the victim. Moreover, when victims of domestic violence seek legal assistance, they are most likely seeking safety against the threat of ongoing violence. Requesting that an abused victim meet with their perpetrator to come up with a resolution may do very little to enhance the safety of the victim and may re-victimize them. Stubbs (2004) argued that assuming a victim would want to find out why they were targeted or have a need for a direct apology is not appropriate for many offences, such as domestic violence where the victimization has typically not been one incident, but repeated violence, over time, against the same victim.

Net widening is another potential problem of restorative justice. It may reduce individual freedom, increase arrests, contribute to behavioural difficulties, and facilitate unnecessary infringement on families (Blomberg, 1977). One of the goals of restorative justice is to keep offenders out of the criminal justice system; however, it has been argued that pre-charge restorative justice programs bring more youth into the justice system than would otherwise be the case (Frazier et al., 1983). Ezell (1989) expressed concern about these programs being coercive in nature with a lack of due process. Galaway and Hudson

(1996) concurred that restorative justice may widen the net of social control by hearing cases the court system or Crown would not have accepted. Walgrave (2003) acknowledged that restorative justice could result in sanctions imposed on people who would have normally been left out entirely by the criminal justice system. Restorative justice may also impose sanctions that the formal justice system would not. For example, those offenders who would not have otherwise been processed by the court system may be ordered to pay restitution, and if they are unable to do so, they might be returned to the criminal justice system for further sanctions (Weitekamp, 2002). The criteria for restorative justice referrals vary greatly; therefore, it is the responsibility of each individual program to decide which cases to accept. This may be detrimental to low-risk offenders who may be accepted into a program knowing their case will help the program's success rate (Bright, 1997).

Mental disorders and learning disabilities can also make a restorative intervention difficult, especially when the offender does not understand the consequences of their behaviour (Corrado et al., 2003). If an offender is not able to respond appropriately to questions asked by the victim, this may present a significant problem for the victim. If the conference concentrates on the offender's issues, or if the offender is unable to demonstrate empathy or show the emotion a victim expects to see, the victim may feel re-victimized or unwilling to go through with the process (Akester, 2002).

Evaluations examining the recidivism rates among restorative justice participants are mixed. The lack of adequate comparative data due to the limited number of evaluations, the research methods used, and the voluntary nature of the programs is problematic and offers limited generalisable results (Latimer, 2001). However, a number

of results indicated a slight decrease in recidivism rates among those who participated in a restorative justice program compared to those in the traditional criminal justice system.

Maxwell et al. (1999) examined restorative conferences in Timaru, New Zealand to evaluate if, when, and how those who participated were reconvicted of a criminal offense compared to a closely matched control group. The evaluation found that, after 12 months, those who participated in a restorative conference were reconvicted less often than the control group. In those cases where participants were reconvicted, the offenses committed were less serious than those of the control group (Maxwell et al., 1999).

In a study from Canberra, Australia, researchers concluded that there was a reduction of 38 crimes per 100 offenders per year for youth previously involved in violent crime who participated in a restorative conference when compared to those who were sent to court. However, similar reductions were not observed among youth involved in other offences, such as impaired driving or property crimes (Schmid, 2001). Sherman and Strang (2007) reviewed case studies from schools and communities that used restorative justice and reported that there was favourable evidence that restorative justice was more effective than short-term prison sentences for more serious and violent crimes. Specifically, offenders committed fewer additional crimes after participating in a restorative justice process than those sentenced to a short prison term. Masters (2001) found that the more serious the offense, the more beneficial the dialog was between those who were directly affected by the offense.

A study from New Zealand found that offenders who felt the restorative conference they participated in was constructive were less likely to re-offend when compared to offenders who felt the conference was a negative, shaming experience

(Morris and Maxwell, 1998). Researchers also found that there was a small positive effect on recidivism rates for those offenders who had direct meetings with the victim. However, Kurki (2002) argued that some studies have shown that recidivism was only delayed. It is difficult to determine the success of evaluations of restorative justice because, not only does restorative justice attempt to reduce offending, the primary aim of many restorative initiatives is to provide better service to victims and heal and strengthen communities (Marshall, 1999). There are many factors that can affect the continuation of crime, including the quality of the restorative justice program or initiatives offered. In conclusion, it is difficult to determine accurate recidivism rates for those who participated in restorative justice for a variety of reasons. In order for this to change, it is imperative to conduct similar studies so that research findings can be compared making the results more conclusive (Luke and Lind, 2002). Demonstrating the ability to draw definitive conclusions regarding the effectiveness of restorative justice, in particular, rates of recidivism, is important not only in the criminal justice system but for the role it might play in school communities.

Chapter Two: School-Based Restorative Justice

Schools are one of the most important institutions because they are central to the development and education of all citizens (Morrison, 2005). Society entrusts schools with the responsibility of providing the foundations for a lifetime of learning. Schools explicitly teach students about numeracy and literacy and implicitly teach them about their place in the world. Therefore, if schools alienate students from the school community, schools might also feel alienated from society as a whole (Morrison, 2002). Restorative practices are an opportunity for individuals to learn from their experiences in a meaningful and supported environment (Wachtel, 2000; Cameron and Thorsborne, 2001). Students not alienated or disrespected are empowered to curb their behaviour with the support of others in the school community making it less likely that they will engage in further delinquent behaviour (Claassen, 1993).

School Bullying

School bullying has been commonly defined as the exposure of a student, repeatedly and over time, to intentional injury or discomfort inflicted by one or more other students (Olweus, 1993; Rigby, 1996). Research from a Canadian survey conducted in Toronto of students' age 4 to 14 in 22 different classrooms found that one-third of the students were involved in bullying as either victims or offenders (Charach et al. (1995). In the United States, slightly more than one-fifth (22 per cent) of students reported being physically bullied, and one-quarter reported being teased or emotionally bullied in the past year. This accounted for 13.7 to 15.7 million students (Finkelhor et al., 2005). Research has shown that if bullying behaviour was not corrected at school, bullies were

more likely to act violently as adults at home and at work (Farrington, 1993). They were also more likely to experience depression and suicidal thoughts. Furthermore, those who were both bullies and victims of bullying were more prone to mental illness (Rigby, 2003).

In other research from the United States into adolescent health, the disconnect from the school community increased the risk for the misuse of alcohol and drugs, violent and deviant behaviour, and early unwanted pregnancy, while a positive connection to school was a protective factor in diverting youth from such behaviours (McNeely et al., 2002). Rigby (2003) suggested that youth who bullied others typically felt little or no pride in their school and were not well integrated into the community. Similarly, students who carried out school violence typically reported feeling bullied or persecuted by others within their school or being socially marginalized (Vossekuil et al., 2002). In this example, respect and connectedness were not fulfilled for the student and social status faltered. If students had pride in their school, respected their school community, felt needed, and identified with the school community, fewer incidents of violence or deviant behaviour were likely to occur (Morrison, 2004).

Suspensions

Schools continue to face increased levels of reported bullying, harassment, violence, disruptive behaviour, drug abuse, and property crime (White et al., 2001). However, it remains unclear how schools should respond to behaviours that threaten school safety (Braithwaite, 2003). Some schools have adopted a band-aid approach that fails to address the problem and its root causes (Morrison, 2007). The most popular

response to issues of school safety has been zero tolerance policies and increased security measures, such as the installation of metal detectors, video cameras, and the use of security guards (Morrison, 2007). Zero tolerance approaches punish offenses severely by expelling or suspending the offending students from school. The theory behind suspensions is that a minority of students commit the majority of offenses; therefore, if these students are no longer in school, they are no longer a threat to school safety (Morrison, 2007). Costenbader and Markson (1998) studied the effects of suspensions and concluded that when a student was forced to leave the school on a suspension, they began to socially withdraw, self-respect was negatively affected, the student was stigmatized, the school displaced the problem to the community, there was a disruption of the student's educational progress, and those students were more likely to become involved with the legal system. The 2003 annual youth crime survey conducted in England reported that young people excluded from school were twice as likely to commit offenses as those in school (Phillips and Chamberlain, 2006).

Research from the United States suggested that students who were disengaged from school were more likely to become categorized as an at risk youth, and, if they were not held accountable for their actions, there was a high risk of these youth repeating their behaviour which could have detrimental effects on the overall health of communities (Jull, 2000; Cavanagh and Foster, 2005). Factors that have been strongly associated with young offending include truancy and exclusion, peer pressure, low academic achievement, involvement in bullying, school failure, and a lack of commitment to school (Flood-Page et al., 2000; Berridge et al., 2001; Hammersley et al., 2003; Office for Standards in Education, 2003; Phillips and Chamberlain, 2006). While no single factor

predisposes a young person to offending behaviour, the more risk factors a young person accumulates, the more likely they are to engage in criminal and violent behaviour. Given this, professionals who have noticed a high correlation between offending behaviour and both exclusion and non-attendance at school have proposed the use of initiatives that reduce the number of exclusions. In effect, the belief that most other approaches have failed has brought restorative justice policies to the forefront with a vision of reducing negative incidents and behaviours among youth in the community, while keeping them in school (Morrison, 2007)

Being Restorative in Schools

As restorative justice has gained support over the past decade within the criminal justice system, a number of educators have begun to use similar approaches within schools. Morrison (2007) reported that restorative justice has moved from the criminal justice system to schools because of a general feeling that traditional or current forms of discipline did not prevent misconduct or protect victims. It is common for a student who misbehaves in a school setting to be punished and disciplined on an individual basis and a victim to be ignored altogether. However, restorative justice encourages a collective response by recognizing that many individuals are affected by an incident. Given this, restorative justice attempts to rebuild relationships and the community, instead of assigning blame and dispensing punishment (Wright, 1999). Offending behaviour, therefore, is not simply a violation of the rules, but a violation of people and relationships. Zehr (1985) contended that when an individual was violated by another, it created an obligation on the part of the wrongdoer to repair the harm caused. The harm

caused is recognized not just by those directly affected, but by those close to them (Drewery and Winslade, 2003).

As restorative justice has moved into areas outside of the criminal justice system, the need for a word to replace ‘justice’ has come to the forefront. Those involved in the school system want to distinguish courtrooms and classrooms (Youth Justice Board, 2004). Hopkins (2006) documented that the term restorative justice was too closely linked to the idea of restorative conferencing. Educators were hesitant to use ‘restorative justice’ because conferencing was only one aspect of what they wanted to do. Therefore, restorative justice has been replaced with terms such as restorative interventions, restorative approaches, restorative measures, and restorative practices. Restorative practices include restorative conferencing, but include other approaches such as restorative conversations and mediation, classroom conferences, circle time, and using restorative language. A restorative conversation is usually an immediate response where an incident has indirectly harmed others, and the leader, usually a teacher, helps the person responsible think about the reasons for their behaviour, how it might have affected others, and how they might behave differently in the future (Lloyd et al., 2007). Circle time has been reportedly successful in classrooms where there has been a problem needing to be discussed by the group. It involves everyone and can be effective for creating and maintaining a positive classroom community (Hopkins, 2004). All of these techniques involve the use of active listening, mutual respect, and restorative enquiry which are ways of listening that enables the listener to extract the story while, at the same time, acknowledging their thoughts, feelings, and needs (Hopkins, 2006).

The first documented school-based restorative conference was held at a high school in Queensland, Australia in 1994 as a result of a serious assault at a school dance (Cameron and Thorsborne, 2001). This conference has been recognized as being extremely successful. The process and outcome of the conference inspired a number of educators to search for more non-punitive ways of intervening in cases of serious misconduct in schools (Morrison, 2007). However, for the most part, schools continued to consider offenses in terms of being a challenge to the power of school authorities with no concern for the harm done to individuals and the rest of the school community. There remained a focus on punishment for non-compliance with school rules (Hopkins, 2006).

It can be argued that what happens in schools is related to what happens at home and in the community. The years that an individual is in school are developmentally critical as schools influence the norms and patterns of behaviour that students carry with them into adulthood (Varnham, 2005). Therefore, if a school can encourage healthy and safe school communities, this benefits society as a whole. To minimize harm to society, schools must consider alternatives to suspensions and punishments so that students can continue to be included in their communities and build positive, prosocial relationships (Armstrong et al., 2002).

Research from School-based Programs and Pilot Projects

Restorative practices have been implemented and evaluated in a number of countries and schools. The following section describes some of the current programs and the evaluations of these programs. For the most part, in the educational setting, using the term restorative action or restorative practices has become more favourable in British

Columbia than restorative justice because schools may not want to be seen as ‘doing justice’. For simplification purposes, the term restorative practices will be utilized for the remainder of this chapter and will include the range of flexible responses to situations congruent with proactive strategies that develop positive relationships and reduce the likelihood of disruption, harm, and conflict (Blood and Thorsborne, 2005; Hopkins, 2004; Morrison, 2005; Wachtel and McCold, 2001).

A range of restorative practices are being used in schools. The first level of intervention is informal restorative practices. This includes using restorative language, enquiry, conversations, and check-in circles or circle time. These initiatives use problem-solving and empathetic language, as well as classroom and conflict management approaches, which help with community building. The next level is restorative meetings which include peer mediation, problem solving circles, healing circles, and meetings to re-admit a student after exclusion or suspension. The final level of restorative intervention is formal restorative conferences which include classroom conferences, mini-conferences (not involving the parents or supporters), and full conferences involving those who have been affected by the offense (Riestenberg, 2001; Youth Justice Board, 2004; Mc Garrigle et al., 2006).

Australia

Queensland

As mentioned earlier, the first school-based restorative conference in Australia was held in Queensland at Maroochydore State High School in April 1994 (Cameron and Thorsborne, 2001). The model introduced in Queensland schools was the Community

Accountability Conferencing model adapted from the New Zealand model of Family Group Conferencing. In a New Zealand family group conference, the victim is invited to meet with the offender, the offender's family, and the police. The offense and basic background information about the offender is described by the police officer or facilitator and confirmed by the offender. The victim is then asked to talk about the offense and the effect it has had on them. The conference participants collectively discuss what should be done to repair the harm to the victim and what the offender should do in order to be held accountable for the offense. The offender and his or her family are given a chance to talk privately about suggestions for a resolution or conference plan. Next, the entire group reconvenes to hear the proposed conference plan. The proposed plan is discussed and negotiated by all the parties and, if an agreement is reached, the facilitator puts it in writing (Schmid, 2001).

The initial conference in Queensland led to a pilot program implemented throughout Queensland schools from April 1995 to April 1996 and was evaluated in June 1996. Cameron and Thorsborne (2001) noted that, after the initial conference, the school community felt restorative justice had a lot of offer with respect to the school's goal of promoting healthy relationships within the school. The evaluation consisted of 75 voluntary schools, including middle, secondary, alternative, and private schools from two different regions. The intention of the evaluation was to assess how effective conferencing was for dealing with incidents of serious harm. Three-days of training was offered to principals, vice principals, counselors, staff, and support staff from the different schools. In total, 227 individuals from the schools attended the Community Accountability Conferencing training. As part of this process, 56 conferences were held;

22 from middle schools and 34 from secondary schools. The majority of the conferences were used to deal with serious and harmful behaviours defined as serious assaults, serious victimizations, bullying, property damage and theft, vandalism, drug-related incidents, acts or behaviours that damaged the reputation of the school, truancy, verbal abuse, and persistent classroom disruption (Department of Education Queensland, 1996).

Data from 31 conferences was collected from conference participants to assess perceptions of conferencing effectiveness for incidents of serious harm. This was measured by participant satisfaction, the offenders and victims' sense of reintegration, how the offenders' behaviour was affected, the development of empathy toward the offender, the effect on parents, community, and school relationships, the effect on school behaviour management plans, the effect on exclusion rates, and compliance with agreements. Participants were surveyed two weeks following the conference, four months following the conference, and at the end of the trial period which lasted one year (Department of Education Queensland, 1996).

The findings of the initial trial in Queensland indicated that participants were: highly satisfied with having a say in the process (96 per cent); were satisfied with the way the agreement was reached (87 per cent); felt that they were treated with respect (95 per cent); felt that they were taken seriously (98 per cent); felt understood by others (99 per cent); and felt that the agreement terms were fair (91 per cent). A large majority of the victims surveyed felt that they got what they needed out of the conference (89 per cent) and felt safer as a result of their participation (94 per cent). Offenders felt cared about during the conference (98 per cent), felt loved by those closest to them (95 per cent), were able to make a fresh start (80 per cent), felt forgiven (70 per cent), and felt closer to

those involved in the conference (87 per cent) (Department of Education Queensland, 1996).

According to procedural justice in the control theory of Leventhal (1982), the higher the level of satisfaction with the process, the more likely people were to obey rules when they perceived the process to be fair and when they had control and input on the decision making process. The core idea behind this theory was that participation was essential for the legitimacy of justice procedures. The theory argued that individuals would not feel obligated to comply with authority when they perceived the process as unfair. For the purposes of this evaluation, if an offender was given an opportunity to be heard, the procedure was considered fair (Tyler, 2006).

During this study, participants were interviewed four months following a conference. At this follow-up point, most offenders (87 per cent) reported having better relationships with the other conference participants, three-quarters of the victims (77 per cent) reported improved behaviour on the part of the offender toward them, and 86% of administrators reported improved relationships with victims, offenders, and their supporters. An overwhelming majority of family members (94 per cent) who participated in a conference reported that they felt comfortable approaching the school, viewed the school positively, felt the conferenced incident was handled well, and believed that students were treated fairly (Department of Education Queensland, 1996).

Within the trial period, more than four-fifths (84 per cent) of offenders complied with the terms of their agreement, and 83% did not re-offend within the trial period. A large majority (83 per cent) of administrators and parents reported an overall improvement in offenders' behaviour, and that the offending behaviour had not

reoccurred to their knowledge. In cases where offending behaviour had occurred, almost all administrators and parents (91 per cent) reported that the subsequent offense was less serious than the original behaviour. In approximately three-quarters (76 per cent) of the cases, offenders reported improvement in their own behaviour (Department of Education Queensland, 1996). At the end of the trial period, all of the school personnel surveyed reported that they felt the process reinforced school values and nearly all (92 per cent) felt they had changed their thinking about the usefulness of restorative philosophy (Department of Education Queensland, 1996).

The evaluation demonstrated high rates of participant satisfaction, high rates of compliance, improvements in behaviour, and better relationships within the school. However, out of 75 schools that participated in the study voluntarily, only 56 conferences were held throughout the year. A large amount of funding was provided to train 227 staff from the various schools and, on average, less than one conference was held per school. Moreover, the data in the evaluation was based on only 31 of the 56 conferences. In addition, having three follow up periods throughout the evaluation would have been helpful to determine participant attitudes throughout the process, how the process of relationship building developed, and if and when offenders re-offended. This data would have been beneficial for a longitudinal study or as comparative data.

Despite the extremely low numbers, the evaluation concluded with a recommendation for expansion to five other regions and a second evaluation was completed in 1997 (Cameron and Thorsborne, 2001). The second evaluation in Queensland consisted of 47 schools from five different regions. In total, 152 school staff members participated in the Community Accountability Conferencing three-day training

and 33 conferences for 85 students were held to deal with incidents of serious harm as an alternative to suspension and exclusion. Participants were surveyed twice via phone or in person. The first interview occurred two to three weeks after the conference and the second interview occurred four months after the conference (Education Queensland, 1998).

The findings of the second evaluation in Queensland indicated that: participants were highly satisfied with having a say in the process (96 per cent); were satisfied with the way the agreement was reached (89 per cent); felt that they were treated with respect (95 per cent); felt that they were taken seriously (95 per cent); felt that they were understood by others (88 per cent); and felt that the agreement terms were fair (94 per cent). A large majority of the victims felt that they got what they needed out of the conference (85 per cent) and felt safer; however, only slightly more than one-third (39 per cent) felt more confident as a result of the conference. Offenders felt cared about during the conference (95 per cent), told they were loved by those closest to them (55 per cent), were able to make a fresh start (81 per cent), and felt forgiven (76 per cent) (Education Queensland, 1998).

At the four month follow up point, only half of the offenders reported having better relationships with other conference participants, 67% of victims reported improved behaviour on the part of the offender toward them, 56% of administrators reported improved relationships with offenders and their supporters, and 29% of administrators reported improved relationships with victims and their supporters. Family members who participated reported that they felt comfortable approaching the school (90 per cent), viewed the school positively (90 per cent), felt that students were treated fairly (90 per

cent), and felt that the conferenced incident was handled well (86 per cent) (Education Queensland, 1998).

Within the trial period, only one-quarter of agreements were carried out fully, while another one-third (34 percent) were carried out mostly. Four months following the conference, a majority (60 per cent) of administrators and parents reported that the offending behaviour had not reoccurred; however, in cases where it had reoccurred, almost 80% reported that the behaviour was more serious than the original. The evaluators noted that a lack of support from families to help the student carry out their agreement, as well as the number of challenging students needing a fuller range of interventions over a longer period of time, may have contributed to the number of youth who reoffended and reoffended more seriously. One-quarter (26 per cent) of administrators and parents reported an overall improvement in offenders' behaviour and 40% of offenders reported improvement in their own behaviour. At the end of the trial period, 30% of administrators reported conferencing helped reinforce the school's values, and only 23% reported it was worth the time and effort (Education Queensland, 1998).

This study was successful in demonstrating high rates of initial participant satisfaction for the conferences held. However, the numbers dropped significantly for longer-term changes in behaviour in most areas. Within the 47 voluntary schools, 33 conferences were held. In other words, on average, again, less than one conference per school was held. Moreover, the data could not be compared to other studies and was because of the low number of conferences held. The Queensland studies seemed to 'bite off more than they could chew' (Morrison, 2007b). They started off with large areas, large numbers of people trained, and a large number of participating schools. Despite

these set backs, the overall satisfaction among the school communities were favourable and restorative practices have continued to expand.

New South Wales

In 1997, School Community Forums (based on the model of Community Accountability Conferencing) were introduced in New South Wales. The intention of the project was to reduce the number and length of suspensions in schools. Forums were used as an alternative behaviour management strategy for students at risk of suspension, those already suspended, and those re-entering school after being suspended (McKenzie, 1999). The project was implemented in three districts and operated for 18 months. In total, 15 schools throughout the three districts participated in the three-day training and 105 district and school personnel attended (McKenzie, 1999).

Over the 18 month pilot, 11 schools carried out 20 forums (Morrison, 2001). Of these, 12 of the forums dealt with serious incidents of bullying and harassment, six dealt with disruptive and aggressive behaviour in the classroom and playground, one dealt with a dispute over money, and one dealt with a student, teacher, and family dispute. In order to evaluate the forums, two sets of data were utilized. Qualitative data was collected from interviews and focus groups involving representatives from the school and conference participants, while quantitative data was collected from questionnaires filled out by representatives from the school and some conference participants (McKenzie, 1999). Offenders reported that they had been treated fairly and felt that they would be able to make a fresh start. The majority of victims and their supporters expressed a high level of satisfaction with restorative conferencing because it allowed them to express their feelings and have some sense of control over the negotiations and outcomes. This was

important because the traditional forms of punishment used by the school had historically ignored victims (McKenzie, 1999).

The evaluation revealed improved relationships between students, parents, and the school. Many parents and family members felt the school was really trying to help the student, instead of displacing or simply punishing them. The majority of offenders felt their relationship with their victim had improved considerably since the conference. Staff also reported feeling more understood and supported and, in general, there was more understanding and support within the school (McKenzie, 1999). Behaviour improved throughout the school and 16 out of the 20 violators were not suspended again.

The pilot was inconclusive in the context of the wider project which aimed to reduce and find alternatives to suspensions because only 20 conferences were conducted within an 18-month period of time. The maximum number of conferences undertaken by a school was three, and three schools did not conduct any conferences (McKenzie, 1999). One school district showed a reduction in the number and length of suspensions, but the small number of forums held in the other districts made it difficult to assess the full effect of the strategy on district suspension rates (McKenzie, 1999). The average number of forums per school was less than two making any conclusions difficult and the results ungeneralisable. Of the few forums that were held, they appeared to work best for bullying and harassment because building and maintaining relationships, as well as demonstrating empathy, were reported among participants.

Lewisham

In Lewisham, a suburb of Sydney, the Lewisham Primary School Community Project was implemented in 1998. This school was classified as a 'disadvantaged school' as its students were predominantly from non-English speaking parents (80 per cent) with 10 % being from Aboriginal and Pacific island communities. As necessary elements in learning and development, the goals of the program were to transform the way school community members related to one another, recognize classroom modeling in which all members of the classroom demonstrated positive behaviour, reduce suspension rates, reduce the need for police involvement at the school, and implement daily reflection where everyone shared positive or negative events with the group at the end of the day (Ritchie and O'Connell, 2001).

All teachers and administrators from the school received eight weeks of training in restorative justice theory and practice, as well as follow-up workshops on the development of a safer school (Ritchie and O'Connell, 2001). The teachers incorporated these principals on a daily basis in their classrooms and developed a standardized continuum of practices throughout the school. A checklist of key questions to be used during disciplinary interactions was developed and incorporated throughout the school. The questions emphasized relationships and the consequences of inappropriate behaviour. Conferences were held instead of suspensions so learning and reintegration into the school community could occur (Morrison, 2001).

In Lewisham, the number of playground incidents resulting in formal disciplinary action dropped from an average of 20 per week to approximately two or three per week, and the number of suspensions was also reduced (Ritchie and O'Connell, 2001). The conclusion reached by the school was that the success of the program was

based on the implementation of restorative principles in all areas of teaching and not simply using conferencing after an incident took place. The program started small by introducing a restorative philosophy to get acceptance from staff. The measures were proactive, instead of reactive. However, the evaluation of this program could not be compared to any others because the school implemented restorative principles and standardized school practices which none of the other schools or evaluations did. The school was extremely happy with the outcomes of the study and the way restorative practices have been incorporated into the culture of the school.

South Australia

In 2005, the use of restorative practices was piloted in 13 schools in the Adelaide Metropolitan area of Southern Australia. The area was made up of two clusters, one in the North which consisted of one secondary school and five middle schools, and one in the South which included one secondary school and six middle schools. The goal of implementing restorative practices in these schools was to develop a way to respond to anti-social behaviour and encourage responsibility in students. School staff participated in four days of training on restorative principles, practices and theory, leadership, and conferencing. Parents were invited to attend a two-hour training to increase their awareness of restorative processes, how they were going to be implemented by the schools, and how the same processes could be used at home. Students were also invited to attend a workshop on restorative principles and practices. In total, 11 of the 13 schools trained staff as conference facilitators (Community Matters, 2006).

An evaluation was conducted by the Department of Education and Children's Services in 2006 in consultation with an evaluator from Community Matters. The aim of the evaluation was to provide policy advice to the Chief Executive regarding the implementation and effectiveness of restorative practices. Questionnaires were given to conference participants to assess their satisfaction, students were given questionnaires to assess specific values, and parents and staff were given questionnaires to assess their understanding and attitude toward current school behaviour management and restorative practices. The questionnaires were administered on-line throughout the year after the training was offered. Nearly two-thirds (63 per cent) of the staff from eight schools, the same proportion (54 per cent) of students in kindergarten to grade three, a similar proportion (56 per cent) of students in grade four and over from five schools, and slightly less than one-third (30 per cent) of parents and caregivers completed the questionnaires. Four focus groups were conducted to gather feedback about the implementation of restorative practices, its impacts, and what the contributors of success were; two focus groups were conducted with teachers (one from the south and one from the north), one with conference facilitators, and one with members of leadership teams (Community Matters, 2006).

The staff felt that using circle time and conferences were effective in reducing disruptive behaviour. They also reported increased confidence in students contributing in class, a decrease in stress for staff with less issues to deal with, students managed situations of conflict themselves, and there was an increase in students' social skills. The staff appreciated receiving better information about incidents, improved relationships with students, becoming facilitators of solutions as opposed to determining consequences,

and greater sharing of responsibility for behaviour management. Staff also appreciated the opportunity to discuss what other staff members were doing so they could use common language and develop partnerships of support (Community Matters, 2006).

The evaluation determined that supportive leadership was vital to the success of restorative practices. Parents felt that there were improved relationships with the school, a sense of being included in decision-making, improved relationships with other parents and students, greater family involvement in the school community, and an improvement in school climate. Restorative practices were deemed successful with aggressive and challenging students, bullying and harassment, and relationship issues between students. This evaluation also recorded a positive change in student achievement and attainment. The mechanism for this improvement was an increase in support from staff. In effect, if a student had a solid relationship with their teacher, their academic performance improved. Also, as expected, students were able to achieve more if they were in school. However, it was difficult to separate behaviour from academic achievement because when a student felt welcomed and safe, they could focus on learning; if a teacher had to spend a lot of time addressing behaviour issues, it reduced teaching time (Community Matters, 2006).

The staff reported liking the idea of conferencing for students trying to re-enter school after a suspension in order to revisit the problem behaviour. These conferences allowed schools to develop strategies to move forward, address and change the behaviour, and attempt to get to the root of the behaviour (Community Matters, 2006). However, this view also suggested that the staff were not ready to adopt a complete culture change at the school as they preferred to keep the discipline the same, namely suspensions, and add a restorative element at the end of the suspension period. This could

be seen as a strength or weakness because the staff was open to restorative principles, but the initial goal of the project was to respond to challenging behaviour in a new and more positive manner.

In considering the conclusions reached by this evaluation, it must be kept in mind that there was, again, a low response rate. As a recommendation to increase participation with future evaluations, procedures other than exclusively an on-line survey could have been adopted to increase the response rate. This study increased awareness around the issues that arise when a restorative program is implemented without the support of school staff as well as highlighting the importance of training.

Victoria

The Restorative Practices in School Pilot Project established trial sites across four regions of Victorian schools in Australia. The pilot ran for nine months during the 2001-2002 school year in 23 different schools; 14 secondary, 8 elementary, and one alternative school. The pilot was designed to utilize restorative practices as an alternative to suspension and expulsion, particularly for drug related offenses. In total, 55 staff members were selected from the schools to complete a three-day training session on restorative theory and background, as well as the use of community conferencing in schools. Fourteen other staff members attended a six-day training session on educational conflict resolution. All schools implemented the community conferencing model used with in the youth justice system, as well as other restorative practices, such as classroom circle time (Shaw and Wierenga, 2002).

Qualitative data collected from all participants through self-administered surveys conducted during the week following the conference was used to evaluate the project.

Over the timeframe of the project, 37 conferences were held in eight schools for a number of offenses, such as truancy, theft, harassment, and assault. The evaluation demonstrated high levels of victim and offender satisfaction with the process; however, fewer responses were received from parents. Of those evaluated, results were very satisfactory. Parents, offenders, and facilitators noted that they were pleased with the outcomes of the conferences (Shaw and Wierenga, 2002).

The study also indicated that there were improved relationships among students, a reduction in confrontations, high rates of compliance with agreements, and low rates of re-offending (Shaw and Wierenga, 2002). The researchers reported that when principals and/or vice principals were trained in restorative practices, there was more interest and implementation. A lack of interest among the school leadership was a barrier to implementation (Shaw and Wierenga, 2002). Still, it was difficult to assess the impact of restorative practices because the pilot project ran for only nine months. Given this, the suspension data was unreliable. Furthermore, participants were asked to complete a survey one week following the conference. This left little time for reflection or for the participants to interact after the conference. There was also no data available on relationship building. An average of just over four conferences per school were held which was more than the Queensland study, but not significant for comparisons.

New Zealand

Waikato

In May 1999, restorative conferencing was implemented in schools around Waikato, New Zealand. The project operated until June 2000 with the goal of reducing

suspension and expulsion rates which were extremely high. The family group conferencing model was implemented in five different schools with different characteristics and each school implemented the model differently making direct comparisons difficult. The evaluation of this project was based on data from participant surveys and interviews, conference proceedings and outcomes, and disciplinary information (Adair and Dixon, 2000).

Participants were given anonymous satisfaction surveys with stamped addressed envelopes and 136 were completed by conference participants. Of those who identified their status, 33 were students, 33 were teachers, 36 were parents or guardians, 15 were tutors, 11 were community members, and one was a college chaplain. Interviews were conducted with participants from 15 conferences, three from each school. Over half (59 per cent) of the adults and nearly three-quarters (64 per cent) of the students reported someone was missing from the conference process. While all of the respondents felt that the victim should have been present, only five of the conferences had victim participation. Still, the evaluation found that there was substantial satisfaction among those who participated in a restorative process. Many parents who participated said they had never had such a meaningful conversation with the school until the conference. Of the teachers who participated in a conference, most said they had an eye-opening and, in some cases, a career-changing experience (Drewery and Winslade, 2003). Almost three-quarters (73 per cent) of the adults and two-thirds (65 per cent) of the students felt the conference was useful in resolving the problem in a positive way. In total, 61% of the adults and a slight majority (52 per cent) of the students felt the conference was a way of making a wrong right. Almost all (97 per cent) of the participants felt the conversation

was respectful. And, three-quarters (77 per cent) of adults felt the conference was successful in bring the school family and the community together (Adair and Dixon, 2000).

The decision of whether a case should go to a restorative conference was made by different individuals in the five pilot schools. At four of the schools, the principal decided, sometimes with the assistance of the Guidance Counselor. A restorative conference was not held if there was serious or continual abuse of school staff, if the student was close to graduation, if there was a lack of an identifiable victim, or if the offences involved drug use or dealing drugs because of the legal issues surrounding these acts. The support or lack of support from the people in positions of responsibility made a substantial difference to the success of and commitment to the process. This was attributed to the principals making most of the decisions regarding whether a conference was held (Drewery and Winslade, 2003). In one school, there were no conferences held for six months because the principal applied his own version of conferencing due to time constraints and individual student characteristics. The principal's approach did not always involve the victim or offender's parents. In another school, the counselors had to organize a conference before the principal followed more traditional processes (Adair and Dixon, 2000).

In total, there were 29 conferences held from the five schools. Even though there were a lot of incidents that could have been referred to a conference, the school used suspensions to deal with many problems. The evaluation reported that this was because many cases involved drug offenses, a concern about how long it would take to organize and carry out a conference, and the availability of a facilitator. Some of the schools used

conferences in conjunction with other disciplinary methods which undermined the purpose of the evaluation. At one of the schools, a student was suspended after the conference because the outcomes were not considered sufficient by the principal. All of the schools preferred to combine the use of a conference with a suspension; therefore, the implementation of a conference option had no real effect on school policy. Instead, conferencing was incorporated into existing practices. The evaluation determined that in order to run a conference effectively, an independent facilitator should be used, someone was needed to organize the conference, staff education on the conferencing model was necessary, it would be beneficial for teachers to be given relief time to participate in conferences, and those in charge of discipline need to be on board with the program and utilize it (Adair and Dixon, 2000).

Northland and Auckland

In another project that operated between August 2001 and April 2002, restorative practices were implemented in 29 schools in Northland and Auckland utilizing three different phases. The first phase involved talking to key members within the school regarding the reasons for high suspension rates and potential solutions to the problem. In the second phase, a website was developed for networking and information gathering between schools. The third phase involved two days of training key people from each school on the use of restorative language and conferencing to be used in conversations, classroom conferencing, and formal conferencing (Drewery and Winslade, 2003). The evaluation of this program found that, among those who participated in the project, there were improved relationship building between students, supporters, and teachers, as well

as a feeling of connectedness within the school community (Drewery and Winslade, 2003).

New Zealand Secondary Schools

In 2002, 15 New Zealand secondary schools introduced restorative practices as a response to behavioural problems and high suspension rates. The schools provided basic training to all staff in restorative practices. All of the schools adopted the community accountability model of restorative conferencing to deal with serious disciplinary problems, but they also adopted other restorative approaches to deal with minor problems. The schools implemented mini-conferencing, peer mediation, developed a restorative classroom to deal with in-class problems, and some schools created a restorative thinking room where an offender could go to think about a particular incident and what they might do to respond constructively. An evaluation was conducted through the use of phone and personal interviews with participants in 2006 (Maxwell and Buckley, 2006).

The evaluation indicated that parents felt that there were improved relationships with the school, a sense of being included in decision-making, improved relationships with other parents and other students, greater family involvement in the school community, and an improvement in school climate. Maxwell and Buckley (2006) reported a reduction in suspension numbers for all schools and no exclusions or expulsions were given in four years. They also noted that the use of conferencing was effective for dealing with serious disciplinary problems in a constructive way. Staff became less confrontational and adopted common language and practices around behaviour issues. In total, 12 of the 15 teachers interviewed said they experienced good to

excellent outcomes using restorative practices. Two teachers experienced a mixture of average to good outcomes and one believed average outcomes were achieved. All of the teachers interviewed supported the value of restorative practices as an effective method for managing problems. The teachers reported a reduction in the number of students being suspended, improvements in student achievement and engagement, and improvements in the overall school climate (Maxwell and Buckley, 2006). In successful schools, the principal showed strong leadership and senior management played central roles in ensuring that appropriate practices were developed and sustained. There were also positive changes in student achievement and attainment (Maxwell and Buckley, 2006).

The evaluation found that many of the schools combined the use of restorative practices with other exclusionary measures, or used a conference to reintegrate a student after they were suspended, making a comparison extremely difficult. The schools also implemented different restorative practices and implemented them differently so a comparison to other evaluations and among the schools was not possible. Moreover, the results of the evaluation provided by staff came from one teacher per school. The study lasted four years; however, no comparable or longitudinal data was collected.

Germany

In 1997, funding was provided by the city of Munich to pilot a restorative project in secondary schools. The focus of the project was conflict resolution and peer mediation for teachers and students. The evaluation of this program was published in German, but the preliminary findings were also published in English. The methodology consisted of

observation, standardized questionnaires, and group discussion. Training programs were different for each school and external trainers were utilized (Nothhafft, 2003).

The evaluation indicated that mediation was highly valued by students, parents, and staff. The outcomes of the mediations were highly satisfactory among the parties involved in the conflict. Teachers from the study reported that they were satisfied with the training, noticed an improvement in the school community, and enjoyed sharing interventions with the students as they no longer felt like a 'single combatant'. Group discussions with teachers and students indicated that the training and peer mediations had positive effects (Nothhafft, 2003).

Ireland

Health Promotion Services launched the Restorative Practices in Schools pilot project in September 2003 as a response to the issues of bullying, absenteeism, dropouts, and challenging behaviour reported by schools. In November 2003, information sessions on how restorative justice could be used in schools were conducted and open to all schools. The following year, seven secondary schools (grades seven to twelve) in Northwest Ireland were selected to implement restorative practices. In September 2004, two staff from each school attended a three-day facilitation course on restorative conferencing, and a half-day information session on restorative practices was held at each school for all teaching staff. Implementation began in the 2004-2005 school year and follow-up training was held in the fall of 2005. The schools were selected based on their experience and commitment to the betterment of education within their school. The aims of the study were to assess the feasibility of implementing restorative practices, assess the

attitudes of school staff and students toward restorative practices, and to assess the effect restorative practices had on staff and students (Mc Garrigle et al., 2006).

Data was collected from September 2004 to January 2006 using qualitative and quantitative methods. A range of measures were used to collect data from the schools, including individual and group interviews, school profile questionnaires, and incident reports. After each restorative intervention, the parties involved were asked to fill out incident reports which were analyzed by evaluators (Mc Garrigle et al., 2006). Independent researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with six staff members, three parents, and three groups of students. Throughout the year, staff completed questionnaires on each case that used restorative practices and 40 restorative interventions were evaluated. Types of cases accepted were verbal abuse, bullying, fighting, disruption in class, vandalism, and name-calling. The majority of these incidents would typically result in a detention, office visit, or suspension. Instead, restorative questioning, conferencing, and circle time were used. Principals and teachers were also invited to attend a review session after the first year of the project (Mc Garrigle et al., 2006). Success was identified as participants being able to move on from the situation.

In Ireland, nearly half (43 per cent) of the staff that completed a report indicated that they were very satisfied with the outcome, while one-third reported that the outcome was only satisfactory. Nearly two-thirds (63 per cent) of offenders stated that the outcome was very satisfactory and approximately one-third (35 per cent) said it was satisfactory. Moreover, almost half (43 per cent) of the victims reported that the outcome was very satisfactory. Overall, two-thirds (65 percent) of the outcomes were viewed as very satisfactory, one-third as satisfactory, and 3% as unsatisfactory. Positive feedback from

parents, students, and teachers was provided for the conferencing process. Results from the questionnaires and interviews indicated that nearly all respondents (96 per cent) found the process useful, nearly all victims (98 per cent) felt listened to, and virtually all of the offenders (95 per cent) felt listened to (Mc Garrigle et al., 2006).

The evaluation found better relationships between staff and students, as well as more open relationships between staff members. Some staff identified more support and a better attitude from parents and acknowledged relationships between them and their students were more positive, there were positive changes in students' attitudes, and more positive staff relationships. Parents reported that they felt more listened to, more involved in the school community, had more positive contact with the school, felt it was a safe forum to communicate, and some used the restorative skills at home. Importantly, nearly three-quarters (74 percent) of offenders did not re-offend during the evaluation period (Mc Garrigle et al., 2006).

Through interviews, parents and students identified an improved relationship with the school, a better understanding of their own behaviour, and an improvement in their conflict resolution skills. Those interviewed also indicated that the approaches were fair, non-judgmental, equitable, and conducted in a positive atmosphere (Mc Garrigle et al., 2006). The evaluation revealed a significant decrease in the number of detentions, visits to the principal's office, suspensions, and 'time outs'. The majority of schools reported that they felt the school environment was fairly positive and supportive, the schools had clear policies on issues related to the well-being of students and staff, enough support staff were available to students, and the school promoted a high degree of respect between students and staff. There were also some positive comments made by staff

regarding restorative practices as an appropriate way to address bullying (Mc Garrigle et al., 2006).

This study demonstrated high rates of participant satisfaction; however, the schools were picked based on their commitment to creating a healthier school environment. An average of over five conferences were held per school in the 1½ year time frame of the study, and only six staff (less than one per school), three parents, and three groups of students were interviewed for feedback. The number of conferences held was not significant and did not provide generalisable information from the schools.

Scotland

The Scottish government provided funding for a 30-month pilot project and evaluation in three areas throughout Scotland in 2004. The pilot project was later extended to 2008. The evaluation of the first two years of the project was a collaborative effort involving a research team from the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow, school authority, and Scottish Executive staff. The aim of the pilot was to learn more about restorative practices in the Scottish context and to establish where restorative practices could help manage conflict within schools. In total, 18 schools participated, including 10 high schools (ages 13-18), seven primary schools (ages 5 to 12), and one alternative school. The schools were chosen by the Scottish executive and located in various urban and rural areas with differing economic status. The schools developed their projects at different times and in different ways with varied aims and strategies under a broad but common philosophy of resolving problematic behaviour restoratively. Students and staff

were used to facilitate restorative practices and processes, instead of outside personnel (Kane et al., 2007).

The evaluation involved collecting data through formal and informal interviews, focus groups, meetings, staff and student surveys, and classroom observations. Surveys were administered once in 2005 to gain an overview of each school, but no baseline data was collected. There was a 56% response rate in the primary schools and 42% in the secondary schools. Interviews were conducted with 400 staff, 138 primary students, 93 secondary students, 12 primary parents, and 19 secondary parents. The number of suspensions and disciplinary referrals were analyzed by evaluators as well (Kane et al., 2007).

Each school implemented different restorative approaches, such as: a curriculum focused on relationship development and conflict prevention; the use of restorative language and conversation; circle time; problem solving circles; peer mediation; mediation; restorative conferences; and restorative management for suspensions and reintegration of students (Kane et al., 2007). The evaluation indicated that conferencing was highly valued by students, parents, and staff. The outcomes were highly satisfactory among the parties involved in the conflict, and students reported being satisfied with both the formal and informal conferences that were held (Kane et al., 2007). More positive relationships between staff and students and improved relationships within the schools were reported by staff and students. There was also clear evidence of a reduction in the number of referrals to the principal for disciplinary action. The use of peer mediation in the two primary schools also helped decrease the rate and severity of playground incidents over a two year period. Suspensions were eliminated in some schools and

substantially reduced in others, and exclusions also decreased (Kane et al., 2007). Informal conferences were commonly used for aggressive or challenging behaviour. Circle time was aimed at whole classes to promote good relations, foster self-esteem and respect, and communication skills. This was seen as extremely valuable in the primary schools. This evaluation also indicated positive changes in student achievement and attainment. Most of the schools used restorative practices with traditional punitive responses, rather than as an alternative (Kane et al., 2007).

This evaluation concluded that the programs fostered participant satisfaction, relationship building, and a general reduction in the number of negative incidents. However, the number of conferences or types of restorative practices used was not tracked. The data came strictly from qualitative research which was, for the most part, not representative of the population given that, on average, less than two parents and less than 13 students per school were surveyed. The information collected from the staff was more representative as an average of 22 staff members were interviewed per school. It was not possible to compare the data among the schools in the project or to other projects because the timing and implementation of restorative practices varied. Nevertheless, the results of the program were viewed positively by the government and the project was extended to 2008.

United Kingdom

There are a number of current school-based restorative programs and approaches that have been developed and are being used in middle, secondary, and alternative schools across the United Kingdom. Restorative practices are being used as a way to

manage behaviour in classrooms, to deal with minor offences, such as theft, property damage, and assaults, to resolve playground and school community issues, to resolve conflict between adults within the school or conflict between the school and families, and to raise the attainment of students by reducing bullying and improving behaviour and attitudes (Robb, 2005).

In May 2000, the Youth Justice Board of England and Wales launched a Restorative Justice in Schools pilot program and evaluation that consisted of 26 schools. Of these, 20 schools were secondary schools (ages 11-16) and six were primary schools (ages 4-11). The pilot program implemented restorative practices in the schools by training school staff in active listening, restorative enquiry, circle time, and mediation, as well as developing peer mediation and restorative conferences for serious incidents that would normally involve a suspension. The board let the schools decide how and which practices they implemented because they were all at different levels of implementation and each schools' structure and culture varied greatly and had different needs. For example, peer mediation was not implemented in the primary schools because it was determined that the skills required were not yet developed in younger students (Youth Justice Board, 2004).

The evaluation was completed by an independent organization and the main goals were to address the high levels of victimization, bullying, and robbery in schools, participant satisfaction, the impact of restorative practices, and to assess how successful conferences were at reducing exclusions. Surveys were administered to all of the participating schools as well as a control group that consisted of nine other schools that had similar characteristics, but did not implement restorative practices. Victimization

surveys were given to students in grades six to eight in the secondary schools and grades four and five in the primary schools throughout the four years of the study on a yearly basis starting the year before restorative practices were implemented. The surveys were given to all students by a member of the evaluation team in a group assembly for that grade, by a member of the evaluation team in individual groups, or by school staff in individual groups with guidelines for how to administer the survey. Surveys from schools that did not implement new restorative practices or run at least six conferences were eliminated from the data in order to evaluate the new processes. Approximately 6,000 surveys were collected at baseline and follow-up. Surveys were also administered to all staff by a senior manager in each school and were returned to the evaluation team in self-addressed stamped envelopes. Response rates varied among schools, but 1,000 surveys were returned. In total, 85 key stakeholders from 24 schools were interviewed toward the end of the pilot to provide feedback on implementation and sustainability from their perspective (Youth Justice Board, 2004).

The project's focus was bullying behaviour, low-level anti-social behaviour, and more serious crimes in the schools. However, the project also intended to prevent future incidents by implementing a whole school approach to restorative practices using a wide range of restorative interventions. The program developed a number of strategies to use restorative practices and conferences as opposed to suspensions to keep students in school and reintegrate them back into the school community (Youth Justice Board, 2004).

The evaluation began in September 2001 in two of the schools, while the other school's evaluations began in October 2002. Data was collected until March 2004. Contextual data, such as school enrollment, was collected at the beginning and end of the

evaluation. Performance indicator data, such as exclusion, attendance, staff sickness and turnover, and the number of restorative conferences held, was also collected at the beginning and end of the evaluation. Peer mediation programs were not included in the evaluation because the schools did not track the mediations they conducted (Youth Justice Board, 2004).

A total of 538 victims and offenders were interviewed after they participated in a restorative conference. Of those, 166 were re-interviewed three months later to see if conference agreements had been upheld. Twenty-six facilitators and 25 of the 220 supporters were interviewed following their conferences. Key school stakeholders, such as staff, principals, administrators, counselors, learning support assistants, police officers, mediation service staff, and the restorative justice trainer, were also interviewed (Youth Justice Board, 2004).

In total, 625 conferences were officially run during the pilot involving 1,434 students and 220 supporters. The small number of supporters suggested that they were only involved in approximately one-third to one-quarter of the conferences and that the majority of conferences may have been run like mediations. Full information from 349 of the conferences was available, while 176 contained limited data. Therefore, the final data was drawn from 525 conferences (84 per cent) (Youth Justice Board, 2004).

Conferences were used in response to bullying, assault, name-calling, family feuds, friendship and relationship breakdowns, gossip, theft, abusive text messages, racial abuse, threats, truancy, and possession of weapons. Approximately one-quarter (24 per cent) of the conferences were used to resolve long-term disputes. Conferences were run by outside staff or volunteers in most cases and funding was provided to each school to

do so. The schools found that having two volunteer facilitators to keep awareness in the schools meant more referrals came in and it allowed for a quicker response to incidents (Youth Justice Board, 2004).

The evaluation found high levels of satisfaction with restorative processes. The majority (89 per cent) of participants were satisfied with the outcome and almost all (93 per cent) of the participants thought the process was fair and that justice had been done. Students appreciated having an opportunity to be heard. It helped offenders gain a better understanding of the full effects of their actions and victims were more confident in themselves after the conference.

The majority (92 per cent) of conferences resulted in successful agreements and only a small number (4 per cent) of agreements were broken within three months. Minor behaviour improvements were documented when comparing the performance of the programs running for a longer period of time (Youth Justice Board, 2004). Fixed term suspensions and permanent exclusions decreased more in schools that implemented restorative practices compared to the non-program schools. There was a decrease in bullying, threats, racist name calling, and rumor spreading as a result of restorative practices. The staff felt that using circle time and conferences were effective in reducing disruptive behaviour. They also reported increased confidence in students speaking out in class, a decrease in stress for staff with less issues to deal with, students managed situations of conflict themselves, and there was an increase in students' social skills. A majority of the staff in the UK thought restorative practices complimented other forms of discipline, and they felt exclusions were the best approach to dealing with behaviour problems (Youth Justice Board, 2004).

While the data was generally positive for the individual schools, there was no way of comparing the data because each school implemented different restorative practices. At the three month follow up point, only 166 victims and offenders of the 538 initially surveyed were re-interviewed. Follow-up data from a majority of participants would have been more useful. Also, because this study used many different schools, it was extremely difficult to determine what was truly effective, if anything, in shaping success among the schools.

United States

Pennsylvania

In 1998, an action research project was implemented in southeastern Pennsylvania at Palisades High School. Palisades Middle School joined in the fall of 2000 and Springfield Township High School joined in 2001. The three schools were part of a pilot project developed by the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP) called SaferSanerSchools. The project was developed in response to rising absenteeism and dropout rates, increasing disciplinary problems, and escalating violence in schools (Mirsky, 2003).

The IIRP provided basic knowledge of restorative practices to all of the Palisades High school staff, while eight teachers and eight teacher assistants received IIRP group facilitator training. The high school implemented a number of restorative practices, including ‘check-in’ and ‘check-out’ circles at the beginning and end of each class period and restorative conferencing. The IIRP trained everyone at Palisades Middle School in restorative practices, including school support staff. Some staff took further training

through the IIRP to act as conference facilitators for the school. The middle school implemented classroom circles for information sharing, as well as discipline and restorative conferencing (Mirsky, 2003).

In the fall of 2001, all the staff at Springfield Township High School were trained in restorative practices and the assistant principal and one guidance counselor were trained to facilitate conferences. The school allocated a restorative room for any students asked to leave their classroom for any reason. The student was asked to think about what they did, who had been affected and how, and what they could do to repair the harm. Some teachers utilized a 'check-in' and 'check-out' system periodically throughout the week as a prevention tactic, while conferences were used after more serious incidents took place (Mirsky, 2003).

At Palisades High School, Mirsky (2003) reported decreases throughout the school in a number of areas from the 1998-1999 school year to the 2001-2002 school year. Disciplinary referrals to the office were reduced from 1,752 to 1,154, detentions assigned by administrators were reduced from 716 to 282, detentions assigned by teachers were reduced from 128 to 50, and incidents of disruptive behaviour decreased from 273 to 153. Palisades Middle School discipline referrals were 913 in 2000-2001 and dropped to 516 in 2001-2002, and the number of fights went from 27 in 1999-2000 to 16 in 2001-2002. Out of school suspensions were reduced from 105 in 1998-1999 to 65 in 2001-2002 (Mirsky, 2003). Springfield Township High School had 99 incidents of inappropriate behaviour in 2000-2001 and 32 in 2001-2002. Over the same time frame, 71 incidents of disrespect to teachers were reduced to 21, and 90 incidents of classroom disruption dropped to 26. It was documented that restorative practices also helped

establish a culture of collaboration among staff members and a team atmosphere (Mirsky, 2003).

These reductions were seen as positive changes; however, it is difficult to attribute all of these changes to restorative practices exclusively. Other programs and initiatives were implemented at the same time in these schools making it difficult to determine how much of the reduction was due directly to restorative practices. Also, the evaluators did not track any qualitative data or feedback from those using restorative practices to gain insight and determine if and what practices were being used.

Minnesota

The Minnesota Department of Children Family and Learning supported one of the longest standing projects using restorative practices in schools in the United States. Two projects were implemented from 1998 to 2001 to introduce alternative approaches to suspensions and expulsions. Four school districts were selected from a large number that volunteered to implement a range of restorative practices and develop an evaluation. The aim of the evaluation was to measure the impact of restorative practices on suspensions, expulsions, attendance, academics, and school climate. Attendance and academic achievement were not included in the evaluation due to limited resources, student transfers, and because the results were not statistically significant (Riestenberg, 2001).

One of the schools that took part was Seward Montessori Elementary, a public school, with students from Kindergarten to grade eight. It was a diverse school with 700 students who spoke 27 different languages at home. A behaviour specialist was hired to participate in the conferencing training and conduct the majority of the conferences. Fifty of the 75 staff attended circle training or a classroom management program. The

restorative practices at this school focused on using circles in disciplinary meetings with the offender and the victim, and staff incorporated community building processes in their respective classrooms. At Seward Elementary, behaviour referrals increased from 414 to 512. School suspensions increased from 28 to 35, while out of school suspensions dropped from 28 to 19 (Riestenberg, 2001). This was seen as a positive change because the main goal of the evaluation was to use alternative methods to keep students in school.

Another school that took part was Princeton High School, which was located in a rural setting, and consisted of 3,100 students in grades 9 to 12. The school hired two restorative planners who attended a four-day circle training and a two-day circle keeper training. Modeling and in-class circle facilitation was offered to all teachers at the beginning of each year. They also used circles as an alternative to in-school and out of school suspensions. Surveys were given to 100 staff to access their satisfaction with the circle process. Of these, 27 were returned with 19 reporting their experiences as positive or very positive, five gave no opinion, and three were negative. Behaviour referrals decreased from 1,940 to 1,478 and out of school suspensions dropped from 132 to 95; however, in school suspensions increased from 881 to 899 (Riestenberg, 2001).

Kaposia Elementary, Lincoln Center Elementary, and South St. Paul Junior High (grades 7-12) were schools located in a suburb of Minnesota with 3,570 students. This district had restorative planners in each building. The planners attended a four-day circle training and a two-day circle keeper training. School staff were trained in classroom management and circle processes. The restorative planners provided other training throughout the school year. Both the planners and school staff conducted mini-circles and classroom circles (Riestenberg, 2001). Behaviour referrals decreased substantially from

1,662 to 407, in school suspensions dropped from 126 to 42, and out of school suspensions were reduced from approximately 28 to 14. Surveys were collected after each circle and all participants indicated that they were satisfied with the process. Staff surveys showed that circles had a positive effect on the school and they felt the process was fair to both staff and students (Riestenberg, 2001).

The final district from the first project was the West Central Area Schools which consisted of Kindergarten to grade 12 students in a rural consolidated district. The district had three buildings in three towns and housed 970 students. In total, 34 teachers and administrators participated in 18 hours of Best Educators Practices which included training in restorative language. Ten teachers and teacher's aides attended a three-day training on the use of classroom circles. This district utilized classroom circles and developed a restorative room where students could go to think about an incident, what they could have done differently, and who was affected by their actions (Riestenberg, 2001).

During the three year evaluation period, most of the schools demonstrated reduced numbers of incidents, suspensions, and expulsions. However, there was an increase in the number of behaviour referrals and in school suspensions, which was partially attributed to the students feeling more comfortable reporting incidents. Throughout the evaluation, there was also a policy change regarding out of school suspensions and a commitment that all behaviours were reported to the office (Riestenberg, 2001). The baseline data that was available was difficult to analyze because much of the data was not consistent or reported consistently for the first two years of the project. Moreover, in many cases, district policy superseded a restorative response, the

offender was suspended, and zero tolerance policies clashed with the intent of the program (Riestenberg, 2001).

However, in 2001, the Minnesota Department of Education awarded five additional grants to school districts with plans to provide training to staff on restorative practices and classroom management based on the success of the previous evaluation (Riestenberg, 2003). The five districts approved for funding varied geographically and consisted of an elementary school (kindergarten to grade four) on an Indian reservation, a secondary school (grade nine to twelve) in a suburb of St. Paul, Minneapolis Public Schools, a coalition of alternative schools, and five rural schools (Riestenberg, 2003).

At Casa Lake-Bena Elementary school, 80 staff (96 per cent) participated in a week-long training session in classroom management and problem solving. All of the classrooms held morning meetings to teach social skills and how to apply the skills from the training constantly and consistently. Discipline referrals, in and out of school suspensions, and expulsions at Casa Lake-Bena Elementary decreased substantially afterwards. Discipline referrals went from 335 in the 2001-2002 school year to 153 in the 2002-2003 school; a reduction of 57%. Out of school suspensions decreased by 77% (57 to 13), expulsions went from 7 to 1, and the number of students suspended from school dropped 68%. At Tartan High School, after two years of the project, 398 conferences were held. Of these, 145 included a student, a teacher, and a facilitator; 253 included a student and a facilitator; and 29 were conducted with students only. Behaviour referrals increased from year I to year II from 5,667 in 2001-2002 to 5,933 in 2002-2003. This was linked to the fact that students felt more comfortable reporting incidents and teachers were trying to use alternatives to keep the students in school (Riestenberg, 2003).

Tartan High School hired an outside person to be trained and then train others in the school. They set up workshops, a resource library, speakers, developed a curricula, and conducted circles and conferences. A total of 93 staff participated in 972 hours of trainings over the grant period. An alternative program within the school was developed for those struggling academically and behaviourally. Students who demonstrated behaviour problems, such as being disruptive during class, participated in a circle each week as a way to build community and connect with others. This was used as an alternative to out of school suspensions and the students also had to make amends to their victim and participate in community service (Riestenberg, 2003).

The Minneapolis Public Schools project was the largest district with 4,700 students who spoke 87 different languages at home. The project was aimed at staff development and to embed restorative practices into policy. In total, 680 staff participated in 2,474 hours of restorative trainings. Training was given to 18 of 125 schools in which 680 staff participated in presentations and workshops on restorative principles, circles, behaviour management, classroom management, and the application of restorative principles. The trainings ranged from one hour to four days with follow-up sessions and mentoring. In addition, 40 parents participated in the training and 700 students participated in circles as part of the modeling process. Data was available for two schools, both Kindergarten to grade 8 where surveys, interviews, and suspension data were collected (Riestenberg, 2003). The two schools had significant changes in suspension rates. There was a 63% reduction in suspensions in one school in 2001-2002 from 800 to 292 and a 45% reduction in the other school from 272 to 149 (Riestenberg,

2003). This was one of the main goals for the school and positively linked to the restorative programs being offered instead of suspensions.

The Minnesota Association of Alternative Programs was a state wide association of alternative schools. The schools had a team of 25 representatives for nine regions attend a three-day training on restorative principles and practices, including circles and conferencing. They worked with the schools in their regions to develop training and implementation plans. In total, 16 schools sent staff to trainings in the first year of the grant and 434 staff participated in 4,692 hours of training by the time the grant ended (Riestenberg, 2003). The staff surveyed throughout the Alternative School Program in Minnesota found it useful to use circles in a number of circumstances. Staff reported that circles were used daily to talk about challenging topics which helped with learning to respect others ideas. Moreover, circles were used to repair the harm from a particular incident, deal with issues and leadership development, study circles were implemented, and relapse circles were used with students with addictions (Riestenberg, 2003).

Red Lake Falls school district is a large area that covers five rural counties. The buildings are miles apart and share administrators. In this project, 17 public schools and two private schools participated. In total, 616 staff participated in 4,602 hours of training on restorative practices and classroom behaviour. The objectives of the project was to provide effective training for staff, measure the utilization of skills by staff, and evaluate the effectiveness of restorative practices, as well as to develop restorative policy. Their long term goal was to implement restorative philosophy emphasizing individual and group problem solving, instead of rewards and punishments. At the Red Lake Falls school district, conferences consistently concluded with an agreement (83 per cent) and

80% of the offenders very much or moderately complied with all of the agreed upon conditions. Slightly more than one-third (35 per cent) of staff reported that incidents of bullying and teasing were reduced as a result of the circles, and 90% felt that there was less student conflict and more individual problem solving taking place (Riestenberg, 2003).

During the second evaluation in Minnesota, elementary students indicated higher levels of satisfaction with the process than high school students. Over 50% of elementary students, but only 10% to 15% of high school students felt that they got along better with classmates, felt better about themselves, solved more of their own problems, wanted to see more circles, felt school was more fun, reported that their school work improved, and felt that they understood the feelings of others better. Moreover, 40% of students reported that they were participating in class more as a result of circle time. Students indicated they felt more comfortable participating because all of the other students were also participating. At three of the other school districts, participants indicated satisfaction with the process, including feeling more hopeful, grateful, confident, and supported after the process (Riestenberg, 2003).

These two evaluations found a decrease in out of school suspensions and participant satisfaction. Staff and students attended a great deal of training in restorative practices, which was seen as a critical part of the program's success. Once more, however, restorative practices were implemented differently throughout the schools making intra-school comparisons extremely difficult.

Summary of the Research Findings

Participant Satisfaction

The research from the different projects identified many similar trends. The most common, mentioned in almost all of the evaluations, was participant satisfaction. Sherman and Strang (2007) conducted an evaluation of restorative justice programs and concluded that victims and offenders who participated in restorative justice were generally satisfied with the overall process. Offenders who participated in restorative justice felt they had been treated fairly, and they appreciated being listened to and recognized as people who had potential. Victims reported that they were glad they attended the conference, they were less fearful and angry with the offender, and they were able to move forward with their lives.

Relationship Building

Another trend from the research was relationship building within the school, and between the schools and families. According to the research literature, the school community was a cornerstone for youth socialization, social control, and was built on relationships (Morrison, 2005). Positive relationships were a key element in preventing misbehaviour because negative behaviour was less likely to occur when individuals had positive attachments to the school and others within the school (Hopkins, 2006). If students did not feel important and significant in positive ways, they looked to be recognized in negative ways (Hirschi, 1969; White et al., 2001). As soon as a relationship within the school was damaged, the cohesiveness of the community was weakened, requiring a collective effort to address the harm (Karp and Breslin, 2001). It was prudent

to strengthen relationships with offenders by showing care and a desire for them to be reintegrated, rather than weakening the relationship by ostracizing them. Masters (2001) argued that positive relationships helped prevent further crime because two key causes of offending were when individuals felt no one was empathic toward them or they felt alienated from their local community. White (2000) argued that building pro-social communities of support around an offender aided in preventing further crime and transformed the conditions which gave rise to criminality.

If students felt a connection to the school (a legitimate institution), there was a greater likelihood that they would either avoid delinquent behaviours or make the transition from delinquency to conventional lifestyles (Bazemore, 2001). Given this, having a supportive school and positive relations with a number of people in the school prevented future offending behaviour (Masters, 2001). Hirschi's social bonding theory (1969) supported the notion that the greater the number of positive relationships a student had with the school community, and the stronger these positive connections were to school, the more likely that individual was to conform. A longitudinal study of adolescent health conducted in the United States found that students who felt connected to their schools were less likely to use alcohol, drugs, engage in violent behaviour, or experience emotional distress (Morrison, 2004). Masters (2001) noted that to improve behaviour in schools, time must be invested into improving the relationships between staff and students.

Using Traditional Discipline Instead of Restorative Practices

A number of schools combined the use of restorative practices with punitive measures which counteracted the intentions of some of the programs. In all the school districts in Minnesota, for example, zero tolerance policies clashed with the intent of the program where, for certain incidents, such as alcohol and drug use, suspensions were mandatory (Riestenberg, 2001). Several evaluations showed schools had difficulty sustaining a restorative philosophy when a punitive concept prevailed within the school. In many cases, the schools chose traditional discipline approaches instead of restorative practices because the incident was not considered appropriate, the offender was perceived as having a poor attitude, positive outcomes could not be guaranteed, staff wanted more severe sanctions, or the staff feared that restorative practices could be manipulated by students (Department of Education Queensland, 1996; Adair and Dixon, 2000; Mc Garrigle et al., 2006; Kane et al., 2007).

In some cases, staff felt that restorative practices threatened school values of discipline. In fact, it was rare for schools to fully embraced restorative practices, and many schools were highly selective in their use of restorative practices. A few staff felt restorative practices should not be used as an alternative to suspension because suspension showed the school community that there were meaningful consequences for breaching rules. Staff in New Zealand and New South Wales, for example, felt that restorative practices could be used, but only in combination with suspensions (McKenzie, 1999; Adair and Dixon, 2000). Drewery and Winslade (2003) concluded that restorative conferencing usually came too late if it was implemented when a suspension was imminent, particularly for continual disobedience. There was an ongoing belief in the

efficacy of punishment combined with a lack of knowledge and training which resulted in some people believing that restorative practices were “soft” (Education Queensland, 1998; Adair and Dixon, 2000; Shaw and Wierenga, 2002).

Staff Time and Comfort for Conferencing

Another concern from a majority of the schools was the amount of time and resources restorative conferencing required. Concerns were raised from staff regarding the amount of time, the number of meetings, and the follow-up required by a conference. Many of the teachers, administrators, and counselors felt that they were already under severe time constraints with regard to curriculum and other school programs. They felt that it was too time consuming and required the sacrifice of other academic subjects with a lack of resources in an already overcrowded curriculum (Department of Education Queensland, 1996; Adair and Dixon, 2000; Shaw and Wierenga, 2002; Community Matters, 2006; Maxwell and Buckley, 2006; Kane et al., 2007).

Some staff were reluctant to use restorative measures because they wanted a ‘quick fix’ in order to get on with their other responsibilities. They found it easier and less time consuming to suspend a student than conference or spend time using circles to repair the harm (Riestenberg, 2001; Adair and Dixon, 2000; Shaw and Wierenga, 2002; Maxwell and Buckley, 2006). More to the point, only approximately one-fifth (19 per cent) of conferences in the United Kingdom involved parents because teachers determined it took too much time to involve them in the process (Youth Justice Board, 2004). Moreover, in New Zealand and New South Wales, evaluators found greater success when a conference was conducted as soon as possible after of the incident, while

teachers reported not having the time to organize, execute, and follow-up from a conference (McKenzie, 1999; Drewery and Winslade, 2003).

In Ireland, some staff reported that they did not think they should be involved with restorative practices because conferencing was a job for guidance counselors and staff with discipline responsibilities (Kane et al., 2007). In effect, the importance of selecting appropriate personnel to conduct forums was a conclusion in a number of the studies. Still, teachers, administrators, and counselors lacked confidence in their ability to facilitate and felt out of their comfort zone while engaging in restorative practices (McKenzie, 1999; Adair and Dixon, 2000; Shaw and Wierenga, 2002; Community Matters, 2006). This may suggest that on-going training, observations, mentoring, and experience are likely required to further increase the use of restorative practices.

Lack of or Support from Participants and School Authorities

The need for parental involvement was highlighted by a majority of the projects, as there was limited involvement in most cases. It was found to be a challenge to get parents to participate and understand the values of restorative practices. Parental training was as important as the training for teachers as it equipped parents to support restorative practices at home; however, most training sessions for parents had low rates of attendance. In cases where families were unwilling or unable to support the school and the student, the conferences were less likely to succeed. It was also determined that it was beneficial for parents to have some general understanding of restorative practices before they were involved as participants (McKenzie, 1999; Shaw and Wierenga, 2002;

Riestenberg, 2003; Mc Garrigle et al., 2006; Community Matters, 2006; Kane et al., 2007).

Several of the evaluations concluded that enthusiasm for the need to change and embracing restorative practices was required from those in charge of the schools. Teachers wanted support, guidance, and acknowledgement that what they were doing was acceptable by those in senior management positions. Teachers were more reluctant to participate if the school's commitment was not evident (Riestenberg, 2001; Drewery and Winslade, 2003; Kane et al., 2007). Without the support of those in positions of authority, it was difficult to communicate the restorative strategy to the rest of the school or other schools, and it was hard to communicate outcomes to staff, students, and parents (Community Matters, 2006; Kane et al., 2007). The effectiveness of restorative practices was higher in schools where buy-in was school-wide and where restorative practices were consistently applied and advocated (Adair and Dixon, 2000; Riestenberg, 2001; Maxwell and Buckley, 2006). In Scotland, change was slow and it was difficult to get those in positions of authority and key staff to remain committed to the project (Kane et al., 2007). If restorative practices were not accepted and modeled by those in positions of authority, the project was more likely to fail because management had the most direct influence on how resources were deployed in the school. In Queensland, a lack of support from the school administrators and families in certain cases may have contributed to the high rate of re-offending in students (Education Queensland, 1998). Where there was evidence of strong enthusiasm and commitment from key staff and school managers, restorative programs were much more effective in promoting change. Some of the staff interviewed identified that the commitment of senior and key staff was central to their

personal development and commitment, as well as visible support and modeling by those in authority positions (Riestenberg, 2001; Riestenberg, 2003; Mc Garrigle et al., 2006).

Limitations of the Studies

There were a number of shortcomings among the evaluations conducted and reviewed. Not many comparisons can be made between the programs because all of the data was collected differently, and the programs implemented a variety of restorative practices and conducted different trainings. The knowledge of restorative philosophy and practice varied greatly among the programs, even within the same schools. Therefore, any conclusions reached were based on the strengths and achievements of the individual school and on their concerns and priorities.

No Change and Evaluative Measures

Another shortfall of the evaluation results was that most schools were not able to document change as a result of the projects. Some schools surveyed students before and after restorative practices were implemented. In these cases, for the most part, participants' views remained the same pre and post implementation. In Germany, the students felt that they learned nothing new regarding conflict resolution skills, and, in Ireland, students thought their school already did a good job preventing and responding to bullying (Nothhafft, 2003; Mc Garrigle et al., 2006). If schools were already perceived as good in these areas, there was no change in students' attitudes after implementing restorative practices. In the United Kingdom, there was no significant difference on attitudes in victimization surveys before and after restorative practices were implemented

between program and non-program schools (Youth Justice Board, 2004). It could not be determined whether restorative practices contributed to lower exclusion rates in a number of the schools because it was only one of a range of multiple, simultaneous innovations being implemented (Adair and Dixon, 2000; Riestenberg, 2001; Youth Justice Board, 2004; Kane et al., 2007).

Moreover, there were no clear definitions of what constituted a conference or how recidivism should be evaluated. There were different types of conferencing conducted, some with scripts and others without. There were trained facilitators, administrators, teachers, and students conducting conferences of which some were short and some were lengthy. The schools did not make it clear if recidivism meant no more referrals to the principal's office, less referrals, fewer offenses, or less offenses committed by the same students. It was also not determined how much time was appropriate to measure behavioural changes. Given this, as the standard of success could vary with each student's circumstances, it is critical that decisions about these types of issues be taken prior to implementation and evaluation. The evaluations conducted to date highlighted the importance of an effective data system for monitoring and evaluating restorative practices and other approaches of disciplining students in order to be able to effectively compare them. This lack of conceptual clarity combined with a lack of validity created ambiguity among restorative practices which called the results of these evaluations into question.

Chapter Three: Best Practices

Schools are complex organizations and each one has individual characteristics that make it difficult to promote one approach that would suit all schools and all needs. However, in order for any process to be truly effective in controlling and reducing anti-social behaviour, a whole-school approach is needed. The school not only needs to deal with individual incidents, but the school community needs to develop a culture that disapproves of negative behaviour and where restorative practices are imbedded in both the curriculum and culture (Braithwaite, 2002). This type of system requires a different mindset on the part of educators and policy makers, as well as a culture shift in the way educators perceive themselves and are perceived by others (Varnham, 2005). Restorative practices should be looked upon not just as a behaviour management tool, but a relational foundation for school culture (Community Matters, 2006; Mc Garrigle et al., 2006; Kane et al., 2007).

Ritchie and O'Connell (2001) argued that a restorative approach was not reliant on a reactive set of measures, but a comprehensive philosophy of engagement and inclusion. Restorative practices are not limited to formal processes, such as mediation and conferencing. Instead, it occurs when schools embrace a restorative philosophy that becomes common practice in day-to-day conversations and, in turn, creates a restorative environment. This happens when students are listened to and encouraged to reflect on their behaviour, when community members express the outcome of a situation on them, and when staff encourage semi-formal processes, such as classroom meetings and circles, to solve problems or to communicate with students. Armstrong et al. (2002) reported that it was difficult to sustain a restorative philosophy in schools where behaviour

management was still largely punitive. Bazemore (2001) pointed out that thinking of restorative justice as a particular program or practice, rather than as a holistic approach, was detrimental because it limited the potential effect of restorative philosophy. Bazemore (2001) also indicated that as a principle-based problem-solving model for responding to wrongdoing, restorative justice did not limit intervention to certain types of offenders and victims and could work successfully for any student.

In order for restorative practices to become part of the school culture, they must be implemented with younger and younger students. The sooner students learn the value of relationships, problem solving, and conflict resolution, the more successful the school will be at creating a climate where connections between people within the school are valued and part of a daily routine. Bullying behaviour is usually less vicious when children are younger, so there is an earlier opportunity for a change in attitudes and behaviours. This will make it much easier in middle and secondary schools where more serious problems are more common (Morrison, 2001). If restorative practices are implemented consistently, it follows that, over time, there will be fewer serious school-based incidents.

Elementary schools are a more appropriate place than high schools to implement restorative practices for a number of reasons. Elementary teachers are more likely to have a shared sense of responsibility for behaviour management and discipline because they have one group of children throughout the day. This gives them more flexibility regarding how they spend their classroom time. In Scotland, restorative practices were more successful in elementary schools where they were easily incorporated into school policies and the environment for disciplinary action was flexible (Kane et al., 2007). High

school teachers normally specialize in certain subjects and see different students throughout the day, thus reducing their time spent with each student. Given this, discipline issues are more readily referred to the office and disciplinary measures are more rigid. Moreover, some restorative practices are incompatible with existing disciplinary sanctions and zero tolerance policies in high schools. In Minnesota, elementary schools were able to emphasize whole school approaches, preventative approaches, language, and values, while the high schools were more likely to start with more challenging students and have restorative meetings and mediations over particular incidents (Riestenberg, 2003).

Elementary schools usually have fewer students than high schools, have a more cohesive community, and are more student focused. Given these conditions, it was easier to establish positive connections, as seen in the United Kingdom, among students aged 11-14; it was this group that were most successful in achieving the objectives of restorative practices (Youth Justice Board, 2004). High schools typically have large numbers of students, the days are fragmented, and classes and teachers are subject focused. Teachers may feel pressure to teach academic content because of the focus on test scores and graduation, as opposed to developing personal, healthy relationships with students. Teaching social skills and handling discipline is expected more from elementary teachers, whereas, in secondary schools, adult behaviour is already expected.

Circle time was found to be especially successful in the United Kingdom's elementary schools because the incidents that took place were less serious and did not require full conferences (Youth Justice Board, 2004). The elementary and alternative schools in Minnesota had strong leadership from teachers and administrators who all

promoted restorative language (effective listening, open-ended questions, empathy, and non-judgmental and positive language), restorative conversations, classroom conferences, and preventative skills programs to reduce and resolve conflict. These programs showed strong evidence of cultural change and a minority of resistant staff. The staff and students of the elementary schools reported measurable improvement in school climate and student behaviour (Riestenberg, 2001).

In order to implement a whole school approach, the school board, administrators, and principals need to support the changes. These are the individuals who need to identify why things need to change, develop a shared vision and commitment to restorative principles, and convince the rest of the school why the changes are important and necessary. Leadership is the most critical aspect of school reform (Marzano, 2003). In order for a school to change its values and school culture, the strategy must be supported and driven by those at the top.

The next step is for the school to have a plan in place for how they want to incorporate restorative practices. Although schools are not homogeneous, everyone in the school needs to be given the same direction, know what they are doing, and know why they are doing it. The school community needs to be educated about what restorative practices are, how they will be implemented, and by whom. Those in charge need to articulate what commitment is expected from the school community and they must allocate the necessary resources. The plan should involve feedback from teachers, parents, and students, and include a range of restorative practices with clear guidance about what interventions are suitable in what situations. As demonstrated by the research reviewed for this paper, this can range from restorative language to restorative

conferences. For example, behaviour issues in the classroom should be dealt with using a circle and restorative language within that classroom. If a physical assault between students takes place, it should be dealt with using a restorative conference. Therefore, restorative practices need to be clearly defined, guidelines must be developed for the types of incidents that are appropriate, and a follow-up procedure must be set in place.

Schools may chose to start with preventative measures, such as restorative language and circle time, which aim to change the ethos within the school and work up to more reactive methods, such as conferences, that seek to deal constructively with incidents that have already happened (Masters, 2001). Once a vision is established, school policies with measurable outcomes need to be changed in order to reflect the new practice with input from those who must implement the policy. Almost all of the evaluations reviewed for this major paper stated that, for restorative practices to work, they must be implemented in school behaviour policies and be formally evaluated on an on-going basis (Department of Education Queensland, 1996; McKenzie, 1999; Adair and Dixon, 2000; Riestenberg, 2001; Shaw and Wierenga, 2002; Riestenberg, 2003; Youth Justice Board, 2004; Mc Garrigle et al., 2006; Kane et al., 2007).

Another crucial aspect when implementing restorative practices is for the whole school community to be trained in restorative practices, philosophy, and conflict resolution. This includes administrators, principals, teachers, teacher's assistants, support staff, parents, and students. It is not enough to provide training only to those who are interested. Instead, providing the same training to all community members creates a more cohesive atmosphere with shared knowledge and a commitment to restorative practices (Youth Justice Board, 2004; Kane et al., 2007). In order for a whole school approach to

behaviour management to work, everyone in the community must be involved (Cameron and Thorsborne, 2001). Although some might expect a certain amount of resistance in all school communities, all members of the school must commit to using restorative values and language. Everybody must consistently apply restorative approaches and principles. The projects that experienced the most success were operating longer which provided them with more time to develop this much needed consistency. Staff and students preferred when there was no ambiguity, and everyone's roles and expectations were clearly defined within the school. This was most likely to happen when each member of the school community undertook the same training and learned the same concepts (Ritchie and O'Connell, 2001; Riestenberg, 2003; Youth Justice Board, 2004; Community Matters, 2006). Therefore, consistency is important to those delivering the program, those participating in the program, and those evaluating the program.

Critical to the implementation of restorative practices is having excellent trainers. External trainers were highly commended and ranked as above average in a number of the evaluations (Shaw and Wierenga, 2002; Riestenberg, 2003; Youth Justice Board, 2004; Mc Garrigle et al., 2006). Quality training delivered by an experienced and credible trainer was seen as a vital part of effective implementation. If the training was not considered valuable by participants, they were less likely to use the skills taught. Given this, one training session in restorative practices is not enough for participants to fully understand the concepts and implement them. On-going training and support are necessary to ensure the school community continues to resolve differences in a restorative manner. Restorative justice trainers are available through many different organizations and, in some cases, at no cost. The number of hours involved in restorative

training varies depending on the organization that offers the training, but it is important to have someone with experience as a resource to assist on an on-going basis. Moreover, the schools that had funding for a restorative coordinator did so, primarily because a number of staff were unsure about their own ability to facilitate restorative practices after the training. They wanted a lot of practice, the ability to observe conferences, and the availability of peer, administrative, and professional support and follow-up training (internal and external) to solidify their new skills (Shaw and Wierenga, 2002; Riestenberg, 2003; Youth Justice Board, 2004; Mc Garrigle et al., 2006). Riestenberg (2003) reported that the most effective training method was to provide intensive training sessions followed by coaching, mentoring, and additional training. Staff appreciated having external facilitators located in the school so that they could become familiar with the community, but remained neutral and removed from the specific situations requiring the use of restorative practices. External facilitators were also able to recognize which restorative practice was best suited to a particular offense because of their previous experience (Riestenberg, 2001; Shaw and Wierenga, 2002; Nothhafft, 2003; Riestenberg, 2003; Mc Garrigle et al., 2006).

Although some schools may prefer to run their own conferences, based on the evaluations, having external staff available to facilitate conferences would ensure neutrality and alleviate pressure from members of the school community. Still, even with the availability of external support, it is crucial for teachers, counselors, and administrators to focus on the day to day practice of restorative principles in their classrooms. The United Kingdom found it useful to be able to use external staff to run conferences so that school staff would not be taken away from teaching. Moreover,

external staff ensured neutrality and there were no issues with people holding preconceived ideas about the student from pervious contacts or experiences (Youth Justice Board, 2004).

As clearly demonstrated in the evaluations, part of the school's commitment to change was the ability to secure funding for on-going training and staff. Funding is needed to provide training and may also be needed to compensate individuals attending the training. If schools want to utilize outside facilitators, funding is needed for those individuals or for substitute staff for teachers engaged in training or conferences. A few of the schools found that having a restorative planner (or someone similar) to focus on restorative practices was useful in ensuring that restorative practices remained a priority and did not take time away from teaching. Limited funding and a lack of resources can mean the end of a project; therefore, before a project is undertaken, funding and resources should be determined and secured (Riestenberg, 2001; Shaw and Wierenga, 2002; Maxwell and Buckley, 2006; Mc Garrigle et al., 2006). Funding should also be secured to conduct ongoing evaluations of the project.

Finally, there needs to be a specific implementation time frame, an evaluation period, and a follow-up period outlined for each school. Many of the pilot programs and evaluations operated for one or two school years, and evaluations were conducted too soon after implementation with no time for the school environment to change. A number of schools reported that the time frame for the pilot was insufficient (McKenzie, 1999; Shaw and Wierenga, 2002; Nothhafft, 2003; Youth Justice Board, 2004; Community Matters, 2006). Furthermore, schools need to develop indicators of success and clearly define what they are with concise and specific goals. Among the programs analyzed for

this paper, many school districts introduced restorative practices differently and there was no direction or definition given as to how restorative practices should be implemented. Each school had separate needs and goals, but, as determined by the evaluations, there needed to be some consistency developed in order to compare data. Some schools felt they did not make much progress, while others reported a lot of change, as defined by fewer negative incidents after implementation (Maxwell and Buckley, 2006; Kane et al., 2007).

Chapter Four: Conclusion

It is difficult, with the little data that exists, to conduct a comparison over time and across schools. There are no standard, reliable, and consistent measurements of restorative practices in schools and, without such data, the outcome of new practices on behaviour can only be partially assessed. Typically, schools have not implemented restorative practices with evaluations in mind, and an outcome-based evaluation framework must be considered at the onset when implementing a program of change. A cost-benefit analysis measuring outcomes, as well as the time and resource requirements for each type of disciplinary approach, such as conferences and suspensions, would be advantageous. Evidence of the effectiveness of restorative practices comes from a small number of quality research and evaluation studies that have drawn favourable conclusions about the introduction of the concept, but they have done so on the basis of a limited series of interviews, case studies, and information. It is important to evaluate restorative projects using criteria which reflect the goals of restorative justice, such as whether restorative practices created or strengthened positive relationships, increased problem-solving skills, increased the community's sense of its capacity to solve problems, increased awareness of and commitment to the good of the community, and created informal support systems for victims and offenders (Bazemore and Umbreit, 1999). Further research is needed to enable schools and communities to make confident decisions about the value of introducing restorative practices more widely.

Those in favour of restorative practices claim it is important for schools to implement these practices because they promote and focus on prevention and intervention. Restorative practices have the potential to reduce the number of suspensions

which, in turn, would reduce the number of youth not in school. Research indicated that students who received suspensions, or were truant, were at risk of becoming involved with subcultures that participated in a wide range of anti-social behaviours. If the student identified with a subculture, their suspension rate was likely to rise as they became disenfranchised from the school (Morrison, 2001).

Implementing a school-based program can be difficult and time consuming. There is a lot of preparation, training, and a commitment to changed behaviour needed, but some believe the overall benefits have the potential to outweigh the initial challenges. If early intervention in schools could help prevent exclusion, create a sense of citizenship, and combat social exclusion among young people, it could be integral for future social development (Mossman and Hughes, 2006). The most important aspect of implementation is using a whole-school approach and a shift in the mindset of administrators from one of punishment to building and sustaining positive relationships (Hopkins, 2006). According to London, "people who violate our trust either by their words or by their deed will remain forever distrusted unless they have done something to earn our forgiveness" (2003: 180). Using this approach, the school community can begin to transform individual problems into collective issues that have the greatest potential for long term solutions. By implementing these ideals, schools can promote a moral education; perhaps even a moral society (Gavrielides, 2005). Sergiovanni (1994) emphasized the importance of shifting the focus in schools from contractual institutions based on rewards and punishments to communities bound by moral commitment, trust, and a sense of purpose. Riestenberg (2001) indicated that no single process could address

all of the harm that occurs in a school, which is why a variety of restorative approaches are needed.

The majority of the research theoretically indicated a favourable outlook for the development of restorative programs in schools. However, these claims were not substantiated in the evaluations conducted of the previous and current school-based programs examined for this paper. There were too many limitations in the evaluative measures and the project designs to base any solid decisions or attribute success solely to restorative practices. Still, given the generally favourable outlook, schools that want to implement restorative practices need support from those in charge of the school. There needs to be a shared vision along with an implementation framework. This should consist of a plan for training, a coordinator, funding, follow-up measures, and an evaluation framework.

Training should be offered by a respected and experienced restorative justice agency to all members of the school community. The training will provide school staff with the skills to resolve differences in respectful and caring ways. Teachers need to know how to, and feel comfortable and supported in referring more serious incidents, such as continued behaviour issues, physical assaults, and bullying, to a restorative coordinator within the school. A neutral restorative coordinator is critical and they must be empowered to receive all the behaviour referrals if a restorative program is going to work. By utilizing this person, time would be saved for the teachers and administrators and it would alleviate any confusion as to who a case should be referred to. The research literature clearly pointed to the notion that restorative processes do not work if cases are referred to the principal, unless the file has legal implications, such as drug related

incidents. The research also confirmed that teachers were already feeling overwhelmed with their day-to-day responsibilities and were not ready to take on the additional responsibilities associated with restorative conferencing.

School based restorative projects need to run for three years before a formal evaluation is conducted. However, evaluation data should be collected and considered right from the onset of any project. One of the problems indicated in the research was the low number of conferences and incidents that were dealt with using restorative practices. There needs to be time to collect baseline data, run conferences, document results, and change the school culture. If a school wants to conduct a useful evaluation, the school community needs to be supportive and apply restorative practices to all situations and use them as a holistic approach to solving problems.

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